

The 'Father of Tasmania'?

Measuring the Legend of
James 'Philosopher' Smith

**The 'Father of Tasmania':
Measuring the Legend of James 'Philosopher' Smith**

by

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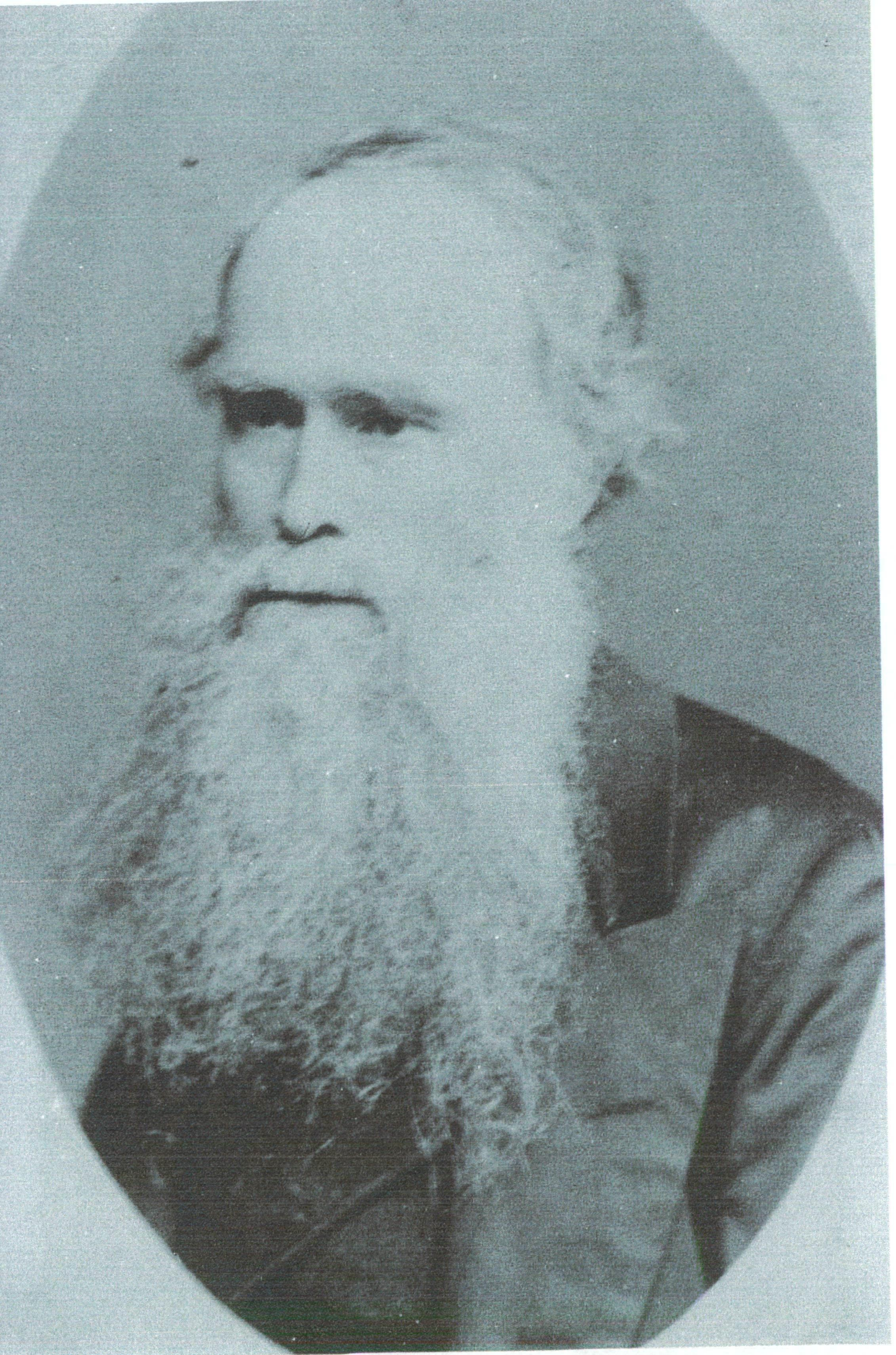
The 'Father of Tasmania'?: Measuring the Legend of James 'Philosopher' Smith

Summary

James 'Philosopher' Smith sparked the Tasmanian mining industry by discovering tin at Mount Bischoff in 1871. This was an enormous boost to a colony depleted by economic depression, mainland Australian import tariffs and emigration. Tin-mining widened not only Tasmania's principally agrarian economic base, but the vision of its then unsuccessful gold prospectors, who were thereby encouraged to search out other minerals. Tin, silver, copper, iron ore and zinc - as well as gold - continue to form a vital export industry today.

By the 1880s, when the mining industry had helped make Tasmania prosperous, Smith had become the island's first native-born popular hero. Among the metaphors and titles foisted upon him was 'father of Tasmania'. As well as considering that claim, this thesis explores Smith's character and the motivation for his quest for minerals. The following questions are discussed: Did Smith prospect in the name of Tasmanian progress or for personal gain? What led him to begin prospecting? What made him a more successful prospector than his contemporaries? How tough were his highland expeditions? Why was he nicknamed Philosopher? What was his system of beliefs and how did it develop? What was the impact upon Smith of the stigma of convictism and the Victorian-era working-man's charter of 'self-culture'? Did he love the bush, or did it, perhaps, represent an escape from the painful realities of human company? Smith is measured against his legend. The strongest pillar of the legend in its modern form, that he withdrew from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company as an expression of disgust at the mining management, is found to tell only part of the story.

Part I of the thesis focuses on Smith's formative years, analysing the factors which shaped his character, ethos and ambitions. Part II examines the period of regular prospecting in Tasmania, culminating in his discovery of what was then regarded as the world's richest tin deposit. Part III discusses Smith's 'retirement', the years following his withdrawal from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, and his return to prospecting towards the end of his life. The conclusion considers Smith's legacy to the Tasmanian mining industry, his significance generally in the course of Tasmanian history, and why his 'star' has faded in the century since his death.



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Outline

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Appendix 1: Smith’s Published Poems

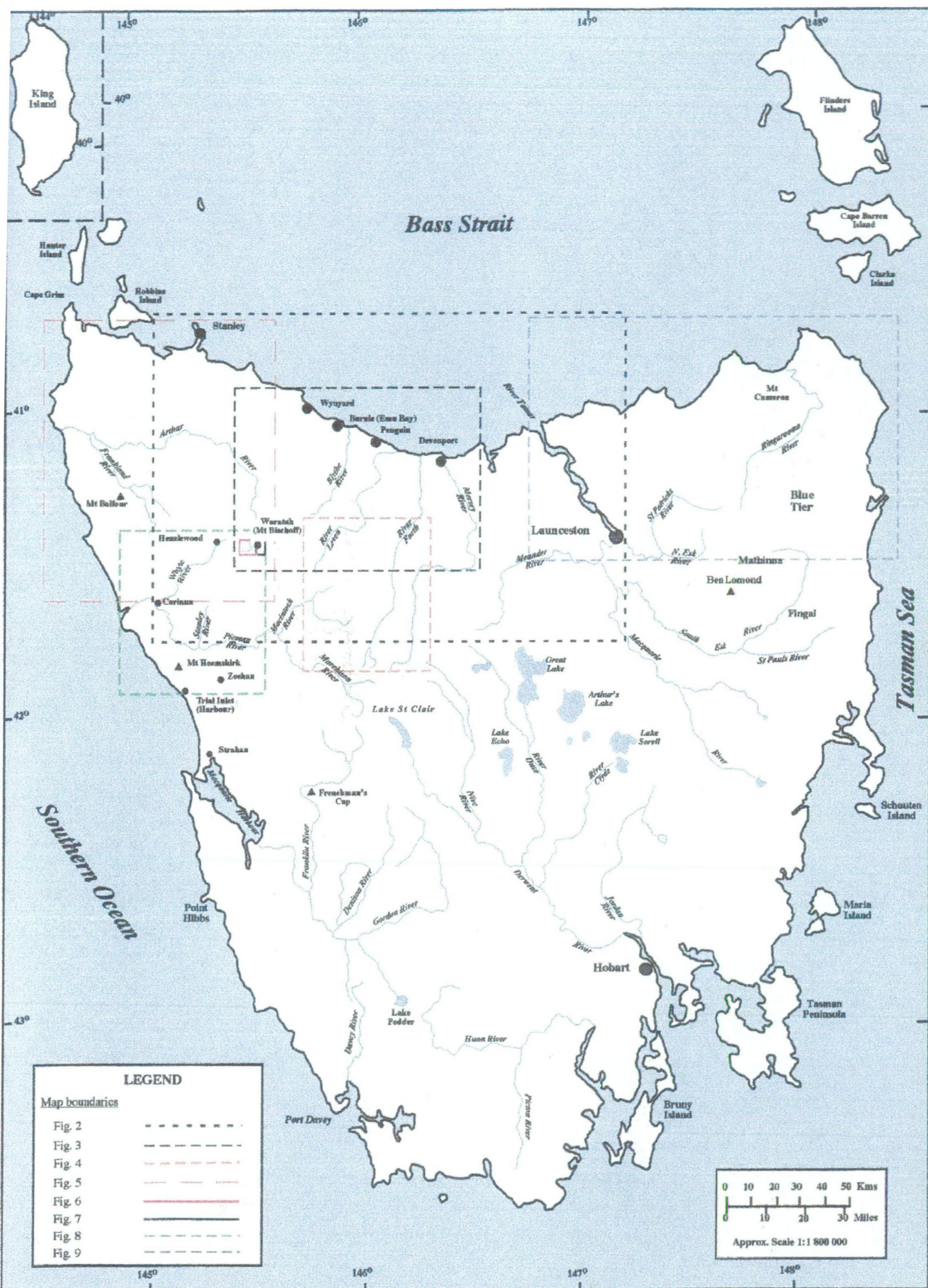


Fig. 1 General Location Map

The 'Father of Tasmania'?:

Measuring the Legend of James 'Philosopher' Smith

Introduction

I could no longer endure the torture of being a director in connection with the present mining management.¹

With these words a 'self-made' man unmade himself. James 'Philosopher' Smith, a Tasmanian Moses happier lost among his graven tablets or the 'trackless wilds' than swapping pleasantries with gentlefolk,² was almost a martyr to that colony's progress.³ Widespread derision by his countrymen did not deter him.⁴ His discovery of the Mount Bischoff tin deposits pulled his people back from the brink of desolation, but, as is the way with mineral prospectors, he did not share in his bequest to the community. Instead, he abandoned one of the great mining fortunes because of a disagreement or a personality clash with the Mount Bischoff mine management.⁵

That is what the Smith legend, in its various stages, at least, would have us believe. The legend was born early in Smith's prospecting career. Arising in the days of African missionary explorer David Livingstone, the Charge of the Light Brigade at the Crimean War, the tragic Burke⁶ and Wills⁷ expedition and other 'heroic' endeavours of Queen Victoria's empire, it began as recognition of Smith's single-mindedness in the

¹ James Smith to William Ritchie 24 May 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

² Edward Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies: Letters to India from North-West Tasmania* (ed. Scott Bennett), Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1980, letter VIII, June 1878, p.25

³ Penguin, 'Mr James Smith and "Waratah"', *Examiner* 31 January 1891

⁴ Thomas Just, 'Tasmania and its Resources', *Cornwall Chronicle* 11 August 1875, p.3

⁵ See, for instance, Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, Melbourne University Press, 1954, p.13; Kerry Pink, *And Wealth For Toil: a History of North-West and Western Tasmania 1825-1900*, Advocate, Burnie, 1990, p.315.

⁶ See Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 'Robert O'Hara Burke (1821-61)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.301-3.

⁷ See Ian F McLaren, 'William Wills (1834-61)' *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne, 1976, pp.410-1

search for minerals.⁸ His landmark tin find in 1871, followed by the simultaneous flowering of the Mount Bischoff mine and Livingstone's martyrdom at the pen of Henry Stanley, prompted stirring praise. Year after year, so the story went, in the name of Tasmanian progress he had chopped his way through sunless forests,⁹ curled up to sleep beneath bushes,¹⁰ in hollow logs¹¹ or in bark gunyahs.¹²

The on-going economic benefit of Smith's tin find in one of Tasmania's 'darkest'¹³ portions led to even greater mythologisation in terms of the presiding African heroes.¹⁴ His battles with thylacines for last, death-defying scraps of food,¹⁵ his survival, nonetheless, without it for days on end¹⁶ as he struggled home emaciated when long since given up for dead,¹⁷ represented, apparently, the greatest endurance of any Australian.¹⁸ His self-sacrifice equalled that of the great warriors of history.¹⁹ He was a public benefactor,²⁰ a 'hero',²¹ a saviour,²² the 'father of Tasmania'.²³ It is not then surprising that eventually the legendary Smith put away his tomahawk and transcended the sunless forest - by *walking on its roof*, as its conqueror and a saviour should.²⁴

⁸ Colonist, 'Original Correspondence', *Cornwall Chronicle* 26 April 1862; 'Our Resources: Devon', *Cornwall Chronicle* 30 April 1862; E B E Walker, 'Another Gold Discovery', *Cornwall Chronicle* 17 March 1869

⁹ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.26

¹⁰ B W Thomas, 'Reward to a Public Benefactor', *Cornwall Chronicle* 27 July 1877

¹¹ E A Bell, 'Bell's Find Boosted State', *Saturday Evening Mercury* 16 March 1874, p.31

¹² Thomas, 'Reward to a Public Benefactor'

¹³ Cecil Northcott, *David Livingstone: His Triumph, Decline and Fall*, Lutterworth, Guildford, UK, 1973, p.89

¹⁴ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', *Age* 27 October 1894, p.11; Canon Hales, 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877

¹⁵ Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 37: Waratah', *Tasmanian Mail* 17 May 1884, p.23; Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania*, A W Birchall and Sons, Launceston, 1909, pp.300-1

¹⁶ 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877

¹⁷ *ibid*; James FitzHenry, 'Vice-Regal Tour', *Tasmanian Mail* 2 April 1881, p.7; John McCall, 'Tasmania: its Resources and Future', *Journal of the Royal Colonial Institute*, session 1909-10, part 1, vol. XLI, December 1909, p.27

¹⁸ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff'

¹⁹ Edward Braddon, introducing lecture by J Harris Wills, 'Lecture on Mount Bischoff', *Examiner* 26 November 1879

²⁰ Thomas, 'Reward to a Public Benefactor'; FitzHenry, 'Vice-Regal Tour'

²¹ 'Lecture on Mount Bischoff', *Examiner* 26 November 1879; leader, *Examiner* 28 October 1884

²² FitzHenry, 'Vice-Regal Tour'; 'Mount Bischoff', *Tasmanian Mail* 5 March 1881; *Examiner* 3 November 1883; East Devon, "'Philosopher Smith" and Bischoff', *North Coast Standard* 10 January 1891

²³ James Kirkwood to Smith 10 July 1886, no. 123, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

²⁴ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff'

The recently opened Tahune Forest Airwalk, a one-kilometre footpath through the rainforest treetops south-west of Hobart, ironically parallels a long-established Tasmanian bush myth. C J Binks, in *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, debunks the legend of the 'horizontal' (*Anodopetalum biglandulosum*) tree or scrub as a scaffolding for bush explorers, equipped with booby traps which plunge the canopy surfer to his death in the horrifying bowels of the forest.²⁵ Binks cites R M Johnston's description of horizontal in *Geology of Tasmania* (1888) as the possible, unwitting source of this fallacy:

The woody interlacing branches, even when not an inch in diameter, will bear the weight of a man laden with his knapsack; but woe betide the luckless wight who, while travelling through this scrub, treads on the treacherous mossy disguised twig or branch which has decayed...down to unknown depths he may drop, while the green treacherous mossy carpet springs into its place like a trap, concealing the engulfed explorer. It is to be feared that one or two of our missing mineral prospectors have met their fate this way...²⁶

Johnston perhaps based his description on the explorer Henry Hellyer's 1827 account of battling

large tracts of dense thicket, from thirty to forty feet high, so closely interwoven and matted together, as to be impenetrable below: and we were often obliged to be walking upon these never-dry, slippery branches, covered with moss, as much as twenty feet above the ground, which, being in many instances rotten, occasioned us many awkward falls, and tore our clothes to rags.²⁷

²⁵ C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, pp.17-8

²⁶ R M Johnston, *Geology of Tasmania*, Hobart, 1888, p.6

²⁷ 'Report of Mr Henry Hellyer, dated Circular Head, 13th March, 1827', in James Bischoff, *Sketch of the History of Van Diemen's Land and an Account of the Van Diemen's Land Company*, London, 1832, p.167. Seasoned bushwalkers E T Emmett, in his *Tasmanian By Road and Track*, Melbourne University Press, 1952, p.9; and Fred Smithies, in J G Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian: Frederick Smithies, O B E: Explorer, Mountaineer, Photographer*, Regal, Launceston, undated, p.49, respectively, wrote clearer accounts of negotiating horizontal scrub.

Similarly, in 1884 Thomas Jones, while writing about Smith, referred to the horizontal on the Mount Bischoff Company's original leases as being in places so thick 'that a man could walk on the flexible tangle seven feet from the ground.'²⁸ Whichever version of the ethereal experience with its rotten, mossy trap, prevailed, it fuelled the imaginations of later, ill-informed writers. For instance, in 1909 the visiting naturalist Geoffrey Smith took the same stroll:

It is quite impossible to push one's way through the Horizontal Scrub, as the matted boughs are far too thick and strong; the only way is to walk on the top of the platform, and to beware of treading on a rotten piece, as frequently bad accidents have occurred from a man falling right through a hole in the Horizontal Scrub on to the ground some thirty or forty feet below.²⁹

Charles Barrett carried the 'airwalk' myth perhaps beyond its centenary in his 1944 travel book *Isle of Mountains*.³⁰ The appeal and potency of the image can be judged from its repetition 160 years after Hellyer's description was written, in a new-age novel offered to tourists by west coast souvenir shops. Not even a tilt of the earth's axis can disturb the smooth sailing of Jean Vormair's heroine:

Unknown to the frightened Olivia, she had left the solidity of the earth, and was even now stepping onto the canopy, formed by masses of impenetrable vines and other parasitic plants which cling high up in the trunks of trees, close to the sun, making a false floor in the rainforest, a ledge far above the ground, where the sodden darkness of centuries of rotting leaves and branches is cut off from all light.³¹

Soon the forest canopy does its deception, and, in a scene reminiscent of Stephen Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, the familiar trapdoor opens:

²⁸ Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 37: Waratah'

²⁹ Geoffrey Smith, *A Naturalist in Tasmania*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1909, p.117

³⁰ Charles Barrett, *Isle of Mountains: Roaming Through Tasmania*, Cassell and Co, London, 1944, p.58

³¹ Jean Vormair, *A Rainforest in Time*, Jarrah, Mirrabooka, Western Australia, 1987, p.37

She fell, tumbling headlong, violently, down a twelve foot drop onto the steaming, real forest floor...Until now she lay in a sodden, crumpled heap in a deep black hole of horror.³²

Johnston's allusion to the anonymous despatch of mineral hunters by the forest canopy perhaps ensured that Smith, the archetypal Tasmanian prospector, would afterwards walk on the wilderness. The Vagabond, John Stanley James (otherwise known as Julian Thomas), had made his name as a journalist in 1876 by his 'shrewd observation' and intimate knowledge of the Melbourne public institutions which he described.³³ His career was on the slide by the time he tackled Tasmania in 1894, however, his 'Mount Bischoff' article retaining his familiar 'breadth of perspective' but wanting in careful research. In the Vagabond's story, Smith's exploits make Henry Stanley's African march look like 'child's play'. He strides

for days over the 'horizontal' or matted scrub, which in some parts covers miles of country forming a flooring high above the earth, without touching the ground.³⁴

While not quite walking on water, it would do for a Christ-like ascetic. Containing other essential elements, such as the sale and giving away of shares while they were worth little, and terrible David Livingstonesque privations of exposure and emaciation³⁵ which not even Smith's dog could endure,³⁶ the Vagabond's 'Mount Bischoff' article is the definitive Victorian-era version of the Smith legend.

It was also that version's last gasp. Given new entries into the pantheon of British epic heroes early in the twentieth century, such as Antarctic explorers Robert Scott³⁷ and Sir Ernest Shackleton,³⁸ the fading of Smith's legend, with all its trappings of British

³² *ibid*, p.38

³³ See John Barnes, 'John Stanley James (1843-96)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.469-70.

³⁴ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff'

³⁵ See, for example, Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones) 'Through Tasmania', *Mercury* 23 March 1884; Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, pp.360-1; *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, Maitland and Krone, Hobart, 1900, vol. 1, p.533.

³⁶ Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p.301

³⁷ See David Divine, *Six Great Explorers: Frobisher, Cook, Mungo Park, Burton, Livingstone, Scott*, H Hamilton, London, 1954, pp.185-216.

³⁸ See, for instance, Lennard Bichel, *Shackleton's Forgotten Argonauts*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1982.

heroism, cannot be linked to the passing of the Victorian era. More likely it was prompted by Australia's development of a collective hero ethos - the 'diggers' - to replace the worship of individuals, as Davison explains:

For over a century Australians worshipped military heroism without being able to prove themselves in battle. When that opportunity came, in the Great War of 1914-18, it was in circumstances that all but destroyed the assumptions of individual valour, endurance and self-sacrifice on which their ideals were founded.³⁹

There were probably other reasons too: the pioneering days of Tasmania, now an Australian state confident in its separate identity rather than a former British prison, were long gone;⁴⁰ Mount Bischoff and Tasmanian mining in general were declining;⁴¹ and, after his death, which lacked the stoic heroism of dying 'on the job' (that is, in his case, on an expedition, like Livingstone), Smith's papers were not in the public domain. Personal knowledge rather than the clichés of legend informed those who did write about him early in the twentieth century, such as Henry Button and Smith's daughter Annie Bertha Crowther, the latter (writing under the pseudonym of George Scott)⁴² borrowing nothing more from the Vagabond than the walk on the horizontal.

It was not until Ronald, Smith's second son, recorded some personal insights about his father in 1947, at a time when big companies were revamping Tasmanian mining, that Smith's legend enjoyed a resurgence.⁴³ In 1954, Geoffrey Blainey, writing what would become the definitive text about Tasmanian mining, *The Peaks of Lyell*,⁴⁴ reccredited Smith with sparking that industry. The image of Smith that prevailed now was less of an explorer of darkest Tasmania than of a notable but typically quixotic prospector, who abandoned his fortune because he disagreed with Mount Bischoff mine

³⁹ Grame Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, New South Wales, 2000, p.24

⁴⁰ E A Beever, *Launceston Bank for Savings 1835-1970: a History of Australia's Oldest Savings Bank*, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.80-1

⁴¹ Geoffrey Blainey, 'The Rise and Decline of the West Coast', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1956, pp.66-74

⁴² George Scott (A B Crowther, nee Smith), 'The Discoverer of Mount Bischoff', *The Lone Hand* 2 December 1907, pp.201-2

⁴³ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith and the Discovery of Tin at Mount Bischoff', 1947, 6-701C, ML MSS3596 (Mitchell Library)

manager Ferd Kayser. Before then, for five decades after Smith's death, the main pillar of the modern Smith legend, that by withdrawing from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company he had surrendered a fortune,⁴⁵ had been neglected.

The archiving of the Smith papers and the indexing of Tasmanian convict records have invited closer analysis of Smith than ever before. Simultaneously, however, the evolution of the environmental movement, together with the 'facelessness' of modern, high-technology mining, have drained the romance from prospecting. Hence, while writers such as Kerry Pink,⁴⁶ C J Binks⁴⁷ and Lou Rae⁴⁸ (the first of whom broached Smith's convict parentage in 1990),⁴⁹ have sketched his life and character, charismatic icons of conservation, such as Gustav Weindorfer and Bob Brown, hold pride of place in Tasmanian bush mythology. Philosopher Smith, the name that it was hoped would 'ever be a household word',⁵⁰ seems almost forgotten, just another grim-faced Victorian patriarch. An escalation of interest in history, though, prompted in part by the increasing availability of genealogical sources and the conversion of the convict 'stain' into a badge of honour, plus increasing acknowledgement of the roots of 'green' politics, may yet accord this 'man of his time' his place in Tasmania's development.

* * * * *

This thesis examines the question: Was James Smith the 'father of Tasmania'? As well as considering that claim, it explores Smith's character and the motivation for his quest for minerals. The following issues are also discussed: What led him to begin prospecting? Did Smith prospect in the name of Tasmanian progress or for personal

⁴⁴ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, pp.13-4

⁴⁵ Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, pp.321-2

⁴⁶ See, for example, Kerry Pink, *The West Coast Story: a History of Western Tasmania and its Mining Fields*, West Coast Pioneers' Museum, Zeehan, 1982, pp.47-55; or 'Discovery Changed Our History', *Advocate* ('The History Makers' supplement) 30 August 1983, pp.4-5.

⁴⁷ Binks, *Explorers*, pp.198-203

⁴⁸ Lou Rae, *A History of Railways and Tramways on Tasmania's West Coast*, 2nd edn., 1984, pp.11-2; *The Emu Bay Railway: VDL Company to Pasminco*, 1991, pp.6-7

⁴⁹ Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.315

⁵⁰ Howard Haywood, *Through Tasmania: Howard Haywood's Illustrated Guide for Visitors and Colonists 1885-6, 1885*, p.26

gain? Why was he nicknamed Philosopher? What was his system of beliefs and how did it develop? What was the impact upon Smith of the stigma of convictism and the Victorian-era working-man's charter of 'self-culture'? How tough were his highland expeditions? Did he love the bush, or did it, perhaps, represent an escape from the painful realities of human company? What made him a more successful prospector than his contemporaries: why did he succeed where others failed? The 'spirit' of prospecting is discussed, and Smith is measured against his legend. The strongest pillar of the legend in its modern form, that he withdrew from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company as an expression of disgust at the mining management, is found to tell only part of the story. Images of Smith that were formed from time to time and his contribution to the development of Tasmania are discussed.

Part I of this thesis focuses on Smith's formative years. The early chapters examine the factors that shaped his character, ethos and ambitions - a turbulent infancy; a strict upbringing and apprenticeship; early familiarity with the bush and prospecting along the Tamar River; adoption of religion; a restless spirit which carried Smith to the Victorian gold rushes at the age of twenty-five.

Part II examines the period of Smith's career of regular prospecting in Tasmania, culminating in his discovery of what was then regarded as the world's richest tin deposit. Smith's mining 'education' was part of his quest for self-improvement and achievement through study and labour. His mining education is traced through three stages: testing the predictions of Reverend W B Clarke⁵¹ that gold would be found on Tasmanian rivers flowing northward; searching generally for minerals in north-west Tasmania; and learning business skills in the process of opening the Penguin and Mount Bischoff mines. Success at Mount Bischoff made Smith's name and his financial security, enabling him to marry and settle down in middle age. His long search for minerals can also be seen as a struggle to take control of his destiny, to be more than an 'expendable' prospector. His split with the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company is examined in this light.

⁵¹ See Ann Mozley, 'William Branwhite Clarke (1798-1878)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.420-2.

Part III looks at Smith's 'retirement', the years after his withdrawal from the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company and from regular prospecting. During this time he established a large family and a large farming property and was recognised as a public benefactor, the elder statesman of Tasmanian mining. He also prospected by proxy, continuing to invest in mineral exploration. A transition is traced from pioneer prospector to the lectern and into politics, in which field he promoted mining and development in the remote areas of the colony. Despite frequent ill-health resulting from his privations, his love of the bush and of prospecting were rejuvenated in his mid sixties.

The conclusion considers Smith's legacy to the Tasmanian mining industry, his significance generally in the course of Tasmanian history, and why his 'star' has faded in the century since his death.

There are rich sources of information about James Smith from which to plot the development of his character and the course of his life. Primary sources include his inward and outward correspondence and letters received by his wife (about 20,000 letters in all), his diaries, notes, published letters, articles and poems. There are reservations attached to using some of this material. Notes which are drafts of letters or poems are not wholly reliable, as they sometimes represent unformed or unfinished thoughts or trains of thought. Notwithstanding, these notes sometimes give valuable insights into Smith's character and life precisely because they were *not* chosen to appear in print. Often, in compiling a letter to a newspaper editor, Smith drafted far more material than was eventually published. Where possible, the finished letter or poem has been consulted in tandem with the drafts.

Unfortunately, Smith's diary entries, potentially the richest source of information about his character, are simply a record of his daily activities, revealing little of his emotional life. This contrasts with the recorded life of another great Tasmanian prospector, the similarly pious George Renison Bell, a fraction of whose correspondence remains today. With Bell, the little there is tells a great deal. While it may never be known whether Smith ever experienced a crisis of faith or was tortured by personal failings, intimate details that might be confided in a personal diary but perhaps not even in letters to close friends, Bell's spiritual struggle and his self-confessed

shortcomings are there for all to see in an erratic diary that he consulted only every few years.⁵²

It is unusual for a biographer to have his subject's complete correspondence, let alone his confessional diaries, as Geoffrey Serle did when writing his biography of John Monash.⁵³ Serle felt like a co-author with Monash who, it seems, had anticipated that he would be the subject of a biography. 'By deliberately leaving such a marvellous record of his life,' Serle writes, 'he enabled me to allow him to speak for himself, so articulately, and to display himself in all his complexity.'⁵⁴ (The author still had to choose which records would make up the display, of course.) Smith does not 'speak' out of his papers, and the many facets of his character are harder to ascertain. In the absence of his outward correspondence prior to 1874, his verse provides the main record of earlier ideals and spiritual beliefs.

Ronald Smith's *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry about his father is not carefully researched, reading instead like a mix of personal recollection and family knowledge of Smith.⁵⁵ Although it neatly summarises the Philosopher's life, its factual errors are perhaps the most enlightening element: James Smith evidently kept much of his own history from his family, exhibiting probably even more reserve than would have been expected in a Victorian-era household. Just as Smith did not discuss his split with the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, his children made only passing reference to it in their accounts of his life, Ronald Smith stating only that 'he soon severed his connexion' with the company.⁵⁶ The first accounts to use the primary material (Smith's

⁵² George Renison Bell's diary is held by Judy Cole, Devonport.

⁵³ Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: a Biography*, Melbourne University Press, 1982. See reviews by Michael Roe, *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 29, no. 4, December 1982, pp.159-60; Ronald Hopkins, *Canberra Historical Journal*, new series, no. 10, September 1982, pp.43-4; Isidor Solomon, *Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, vol. IX, no. 4, 1982, pp.288-91.

⁵⁴ Geoffrey Serle, 'The Writing of Biography and John Monash', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 29, no. 4, December 1982, pp.138-9

⁵⁵ Ronald Smith, 'James Smith (1827-97)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.146-7

⁵⁶ *ibid*

papers) after his death, those written by Garnet and Ronald Smith in 1923 and 1925 respectively,⁵⁷ were 'bare bones' factual accounts of the Mount Bischoff expedition.

Contemporary printed sources add to the picture of Smith's life. James Fenton's⁵⁸ *Bushlife in Tasmania* and Henry Button's *Flotsam and Jetsam* give the perception of close friends of his character and achievements. Thomas Monds' autobiography is the best source for Smith's formative years and suggests how they influenced his later life. Sir Edward Braddon's⁵⁹ letters (published as *A Home in the Colonies*), Van Diemen's Land Company agent J W Norton Smith's⁶⁰ outward despatches and the many newspaper articles written about Smith and his mining ventures reflect how he was regarded within the Tasmanian community during his lifetime. Braddon is the more observant for being a newcomer to the colony and its inhabitants.

Writing biography presents many challenges. The major one is to explore the subject's character rather than simply to present a 'life and times'.⁶¹ The author must be aware of his own biases, but this does not preclude him from the sympathy with the subject which usually motivates the author to pick up his pen to begin with. 'Be unafraid of your admiration,' Peter Hempenstall advises, 'but be prepared to interrogate it'.⁶² There are no 'absolute saints' or 'absolute sinners'.⁶³ Sources must be established and weighed up: how reliable are they? Which are the most credible sources in a particular situation? While the establishment of reliable evidence is crucial to the biographer's task, he must also attempt to analyse the workings of the subject's brain,⁶⁴ which usually requires some speculation. Yet in the traditional scheme of the omniscient author the biographer will try to be as unobtrusive as he can, where possible displaying character

⁵⁷ Garnet Smith, 'The True Story of Mount Bischoff: Told from the Discoverer's Notes', *Advocate* 1 May 1923, p.6; Ronald Smith, "Philosopher" Smith: How He Discovered Mount Bischoff', *Mercury* 31 March 1925, p.3

⁵⁸ See F C Green, 'James Fenton (1820-1901)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.162-3.

⁵⁹ See Scott Bennett, 'Sir Edward Nicholas Coventry Braddon (1829-1904)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp.378-80.

⁶⁰ G P R Chapman, 'James William Norton Smith (1846-1911)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.147-8

⁶¹ Peter Hempenstall, 'A Biographer's Checklist', *Locality*, vol. 8, no. 3, Spring 1997, p.4

⁶² *ibid*, p.6

⁶³ Serle, 'The Writing of Biography and John Monash', p.132

⁶⁴ Hempenstall, p.5

by recounting incidents and implying conclusions from them. Ultimately, it is not for the writer to pass final judgement.⁶⁵

Inevitably, artificial constraints must be placed upon the subject's life. A narrative order must be imposed to give the work a shape that the reader can follow,⁶⁶ while acknowledging the ambiguities and dead ends that every life contains.⁶⁷ The major advantage of a chronological structure is that the reader wants to know what happens next.⁶⁸ Particularly since 1980, however, Australian biographers have experimented with their approach, some abandoning the traditional omniscient author and/or the chronological scheme. Brian Matthews' *Louisa*,⁶⁹ about Henry Lawson's remarkable mother, takes the unlikely approach of using an alter ego to speculate about and question the available evidence, blurring 'the boundaries between then and now, fact and fiction'.⁷⁰ Sylvia Lawson's *The Archibald Paradox: a Strange Case of Authorship*⁷¹ plays on the word 'authorship'. The author of the title is J F Archibald, the boisterous founding editor of the *Bulletin*, whose prejudices coloured the journal despite his reticence to pick up the pen. Lawson's own role as author - as storyteller or biographer - is equally ambiguous. This book is at least as much a study of the *Bulletin*'s early years as a biography of Archibald. It is, according to one reviewer, 'simultaneously biography, social history, and artistic construct'.⁷² In the last two decades some writers have sought greater psychological depth, as exemplified by A W Martin's psychosocial biography of Sir Henry Parkes.⁷³ These methods are means to the same end. 'The biographer's role,' according to Marion Diamond,

⁶⁵ Serle, 'The Writing of Biography and John Monash', p.132

⁶⁶ Hempenstall, p.7

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p.6

⁶⁸ Serle, 'The Writing of Biography and John Monash', p.133

⁶⁹ Brian Matthews, *Louisa*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne, 1987

⁷⁰ Stuart MacIntyre, 'Biography', in *Oxford Companion to Australian History* (eds. Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart MacIntyre), Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p.72

⁷¹ Sylvia Lawson, *The Archibald Paradox: a Strange Case of Authorship*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1987. See review by David Adams, 'Archibald's 'Print Circus'', *Overland*, no. 94/95, May 1984, pp.80-81.

⁷² Ken Goodwin, review of *The Archibald Paradox: a Strange Case of Authorship* by Sylvia Lawson, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 34, no. 2, 1988, p.282

⁷³ A W Martin, *Henry Parkes*, Melbourne University Press, 1980. See reviews by D I McDonald, *Canberra Historical Journal*, new series, no. 7, March 1981, pp.41-2; Stuart MacIntyre, 'Constant Master', *Overland*, no. 85, October 1981, pp.69-70; L F Crisp,

is to shape the subject's life into a coherent narrative, while remaining true to the available evidence about that life, and sensitive to the inevitable gaps in the record.⁷⁴

The subject's childhood, a significant time for character development, is in many cases the most poorly recorded period of his life. Serle tots up all that he knows about John Monash's early life while admitting that little inference can be drawn from it:

So far as we know, it was a fairly undisturbed and unremarkable childhood: not unhappy, not oppressive, no evidence of slights and taunts, no conspicuous tensions or deprivations which might implant driving ambition and an implacable will to succeed. Yet his unknown fears, loves and hates in these years are the key to his subsequent career.⁷⁵

Sometimes the gaps in the record are themselves clues to character or character development: Smith's silence about his early years is probably due to the stigma of his ex-convict parentage, a shame which probably intensified his will to succeed.⁷⁶

There have been only a few biographies of the 'finders' of Australian mining, the geologists and prospectors. Most studies of this kind lack depth, failing to reach an understanding of the subject's character. While figures such as Harry Lasseter,⁷⁷ Edward Hargraves and W B Clarke make for fascinating reading, the lives of some of this country's great prospectors are difficult to trace and are probably unremarkable aside from their discoveries. Three works are of particular interest: Elena Grainger's *The Remarkable Reverend Clarke*,⁷⁸ Helen Heney's *In A Dark Glass: the Story of Paul*

Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol. 27, no. 1, 1981, p.96; Richard Ely, *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 28, no. 1, March 1981, pp.54-7.

⁷⁴ Marion Diamond, 'Biography and History: Pondering the Issues', *Locality*, vol. 8, no. 3, Spring 1997, p.11

⁷⁵ Serle, *John Monash*, p.8

⁷⁶ For the convict stain generally see Henry Reynolds, 'That Hated Stain': the Aftermath of Transportation in Tasmania', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 14, no. 53, October 1969, pp.19-31; and Peter Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973.

⁷⁷ See G P Walsh, 'Lewis Hubert (Harold Bell) Lasseter (1880-1931)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp.676-7.

⁷⁸ Elena Grainger, *The Remarkable Reverend Clarke: the Life and Times of the Father of Australian Geology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982

*Edmond Strzelecki*⁷⁹ and Lech Paszkowski's *Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki: Reflections on his Life*.⁸⁰ It is appropriate that this should be the case, since the subjects of these books were pioneers of Australian geology, W B Clarke being recognised as the 'father' figure in this field and both men having been touted as the first discoverer of gold in this country. While Grainger was fortunate to have rich primary material to work with, Strzelecki's 'biographers' had only snippets, leading Paszkowski to state in his introduction,

it is thus impossible to write a satisfactory biography. This book is only an attempt to reconstruct a sequence of facts framed by the period of his life.⁸¹

Heney, nevertheless, attempts a psychological study of Strzelecki which largely and unfairly belittles him based on scant evidence. Her biography is the product of 'expediency', written without any affinity for her subject:

I made the great mistake - and if you are going to write books...please save yourself by never choosing a subject with whom you're not in sympathy. To have to live month after month with a person you don't like, it's like producing a baby you don't want.⁸²

While Paszkowski's study of Strzelecki is more sympathetic, fairer and better researched, it is, of course, more of a 'life and times' than a biography.

Despite some stilted expression, *The Remarkable Reverend Clarke* is an enjoyable account rich in detail. Grainger makes the sensible decision to limit herself to a discussion of W B Clarke's personality and the geological work for which he is famous, only touching upon his duties as a clergyman 'as they impinge on his career as

⁷⁹ Helen Heney, *In A Dark Glass: the Story of Paul Edmond Strzelecki*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1961. See review by M Sadhu, 'A Wrong Mirror', *Times Literary Supplement* 1 June 1962.

⁸⁰ Lech Paszkowski, *Sir Paul Edmund de Strzelecki: Reflections on His Life*, Arcadia, Melbourne, 1997

⁸¹ Paszkowski, *Sir Edmund de Strzelecki*, p.XIV

⁸² Helen Heney, as quoted in G Giuffre, *A Writing Life*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p.125; cited in Paszkowski, *Sir Edmund de Strzelecki*, pp.250-1

a geologist and contribute to the overall portrait.⁸³ To do otherwise would be to produce an immense study and to detract from the central interest.

Perhaps the best-known biography of an Australian prospector is Ion L Idriess's largely fictionalised *Lasseter's Last Ride*,⁸⁴ which is much more the story of the Lasseter expeditions than of Lasseter's personality or motivations. Idriess is more concerned with telling a 'rattling good yarn' than examining the mysteries and conflicts presented by Lasseter's character. Micky the Aboriginal guide is discussed in more depth than Harry Lasseter, and romantic descriptions of the landscape are the most lasting impression of this book.

Tess Thomson's *Paddy Hannan: a Claim to Fame*⁸⁵ is little more than a genealogist's treatment of Hannan's story which overcompensates for lack of information about Hannan's life by according importance to small events that do not merit it. Clive Turnbull gives more depth and background to Paddy's story in *Frontier: the Story of Paddy Hannan*.⁸⁶ Forty-one pages prove sufficient to interpret the known facts of Hannan's life with vigour and insight.

The advantages that the biographer of James Smith has are the abundance of information and the unusually interesting life of the subject. Lasseter aside, it is hard to imagine that a more compelling personality has hit the jackpot in Australian mining. Unlike some of his fellows, Smith does not fade into the background after making his famous discovery. His movements can be traced before and after that point, and there is clear evidence as to his motivations. Although Smith's character seems straightforward compared to that of Lasseter or Strzelecki, he was far more than another simple labourer who struck it lucky. The challenge in writing about Smith is to sift the facts from the plethora of letters and notes available, and to present them without romanticising his character and his 'heroic' image. Elements of the well-known Smith legend - his

⁸³ Grainger, *The Remarkable Reverend Clarke*, p.14

⁸⁴ Ion L Idriess, *Lasseter's Last Ride*, Angus & Robertson, London, 1979 (first published 1931)

⁸⁵ Tess Thomson, *Paddy Hannan: a Claim to Fame*, Thomsons Reward, Kalgoorlie, 1992. See Geoffrey Blainey, 'Patrick Hannan (1843-1925)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp.188-9.

⁸⁶ Clive Turnbull, *Frontier: the Story of Paddy Hannan*, Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1949

personality, his interests, his motivations and even his nickname - must be re-examined. His story has been told many times in books, newspaper and journal articles, but never with great depth, and errors have therefore been perpetuated. Fortunately, the man can be separated from all the myths.

The 'mainspring' of alchemy was the fabled 'Philosopher's Stone',⁸⁷ modelled on the belief that

there abides in Nature a certain pure matter, which, being discovered and brought by Art to perfection, converts to itself proportionally all imperfect bodies that it touches.⁸⁸

That is, it turned base metal into gold, and gave man immortality.

James Smith almost achieved both. It is easy to imagine his nickname Philosopher being applied as an abstraction from the Philosopher's Stone, once Tasmania's 'grey gold',⁸⁹ the tin of Mount Bischoff and the north-east, had given it a semblance of the boost that gold rushes gave Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and later Western Australia.⁹⁰ In fact he gained the title before he gained the tinstone. In notes probably prepared for an article or lecture about his life, Smith wrote that 'Mr Smith has for more than half his life been known under the sobriquet of Philosopher Smith.'⁹¹ While this suggests that the nickname possibly even preceded his regular prospecting career, which began in 1859, the earliest existing record of its use is in July 1871,⁹² indicating perhaps that in its early years it was considered a term of derision or at least inappropriate in the public forum. The name, derisive or not, probably reflected

⁸⁷ John Read, *Through Alchemy to Chemistry: a Procession of Ideas and Personalities*, G Bell & Sons, London, 1961, pp.28-40

⁸⁸ Arnold of Villanova; cited by Read, *Through Alchemy to Chemistry*, p.28

⁸⁹ Geoff Wilson, 'Mad Tassie for Grey: Derby Turns the Clock Back 100 Years', *Sunday Examiner Express* 16 November 1974

⁹⁰ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.60

⁹¹ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁹² J W Norton Smith to Court of the Van Diemen's Land Company, OD25, 16 July 1871, VDL47/1 (AOT)

his scholarly mien (including a patriarchal beard), solemn declarations and ascetic lifestyle.

Smith's discovery of first the Penguin silver mine, then the Mount Bischoff tin mine, probably legitimised his nickname. The latter find sparked the immensely valuable Tasmanian mining industry. This was the first significant mineral find in the colony at a time when economic impetus was needed desperately. His success inspired self-confidence in Tasmanians: time after time Smith was cited as an example of how individual endeavour could boost the progress of the colony.⁹³ The discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff unfastened Tasmanian miners from the single-minded pursuit of gold. While few large, payable gold deposits would be found in Tasmania, tin, silver-lead, copper, zinc and iron ore would form the basis of what remains a major export industry. Mount Bischoff was the catalyst for the widespread exploration that uncovered these rich lodes.

Smith was *not* the 'father of Tasmania'. Fatherhood, in the historical sense, is a patriarchal term which is applied to pigeon-hole rather than analyse a subject. Parenthood of anything but a child is difficult for a human being to live up to. No one person alone ever conceived a colony, state or country. Smith did not 'find' Tasmania for Europe as an explorer, did not save it in battle like Stephen F Austin of Texas,⁹⁴ who is like a 'federation father' and war hero rolled into one.⁹⁵ Although it could be argued that he created civilisations (towns, at least, especially Waratah), in the manner of Kipling's explorer⁹⁶ or the way Sir Stamford Raffles apparently created Singapore, he did not leave his imprint in their ethos and street plans the way Raffles did.⁹⁷

The title 'father' has been bandied about so much that it is meaningless. Sir Henry Parkes has been called the 'father of Australian federation',⁹⁸ yet the Centenary of

⁹³ See, for instance, 'Dearth of Prospectors', (leader), *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* 5 August 1914.

⁹⁴ Carleton Beals, *Stephen F Austin: Father of Texas*, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1953

⁹⁵ Beals, *Stephen F Austin*, p.VI

⁹⁶ Rudyard Kipling, *Collected Verse of Rudyard Kipling*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1912, pp.21-6

⁹⁷ Raymond Flower, *Raffles: the Story of Singapore*, Eastern University Press, Singapore, 1984, pp.58-9

⁹⁸ for example, C C Smith, *Sir Henry Parkes: Greatest Australian Statesman, Father of Federation*, Sydney, 1934

Federation in 2001 revealed that each state had its own 'fathers of federation', such as Sir William McMillan of New South Wales.⁹⁹ Amidst these national celebrations, the death of former chief government architect and Commissioner of the National Capital Development Commission, Sir John Overall, revealed him to be the 'father of Canberra'.¹⁰⁰ This designation may have surprised those who had already given that honour to John Gale,¹⁰¹ the Wesleyan minister who in 1855 decided that the Limestone Plains on which Canberra now stands would be a good place for a city, and Sir Austin Chapman,¹⁰² who fought for Gale's city site to be the Australian capital. If it is a case of 'first in, best dressed', they certainly had priority. Perhaps the city's original architect Walter Burley Griffin and the 'founding fathers' of the nation also have a claim to being 'fathers of Canberra'.

In the absence of DNA testing, the jockeying of contested paternity can be awkward. George Washington is the 'Father of his Country',¹⁰³ but Abraham Lincoln siphons off some of the glory as 'father Abraham', who 'carries the torch of the American dream of noble idealism, of self-sacrifice and common humanity, of liberty and equality for all'.¹⁰⁴ Some fatherhood appears to be conceived by historians trying to make their work seem important. Commodore John Barry is 'father of the American navy',¹⁰⁵ but, presumably, decrepitude and pacification have allowed Benjamin Franklin Tracy to leapfrog him as the 'Father of the Modern American Fighting Navy'.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁹ Peter M Gunnar, *Good Iron Mac: the Life of Australian Federation Father Sir William McMillan*, Federation Press, Sydney, 1995

¹⁰⁰ Philippa Thomas, 'Father of Canberra Honoured at Service', *Canberra Times* 15 September 2001, p.4

¹⁰¹ *Who Was Sir Austin Chapman?* website, www.chapmanps.act.edu.au/Sir_Austin_Chapman.html; *Celebrating Canberra's History* website, www.dcita.gov.au/Article/0,,0_1-2_15577,00.html

¹⁰² Susan Mary Woolcock Withycombe, *Gale Force: John Gale and the Siting of the National Capital*, Queanbeyan District Centenary of Federation Committee, Queanbeyan, 2001, pp.109, 116-9. See also *Father of Canberra: John Gale 1831-1929* website, www.john-gale.house.cx/; *Queanbeyan* website, www.angelfire.com/au/aust/queanbeyanD.html

¹⁰³ Robert Shogan, *The Double-Edged Sword: How Character Makes and Ruins Presidents, from Washington to Clinton*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1999, p.19

¹⁰⁴ Stephen B Oates, *Abraham Lincoln: the Man Behind the Myths*, Harper & Row, New York, 1984, p.30

¹⁰⁵ Martin Ignatius Joseph Griffiths, *The Story of Commodore John Barry, 'Father of the American Navy'*, Philadelphia, 1908

¹⁰⁶ B Franklin Cooling, *Benjamin Franklin Tracy: Father of the Modern American Fighting Navy*, Archon, Hamden, Connecticut, 1973

Those who want to revise history also find it a useful peg. 'Father Lenin' became a cynical propaganda tool in the Soviet Union. Its roots in the traditional Russian designation of the tsar as the 'little father', an 'intermediary between peasant and God who ruled by divine right', is an irony seemingly lost on the Politburo.¹⁰⁷ After Lenin joined God, was embalmed and publicly enshrined in 1924, he continued to live as 'teacher, father and comrade'.¹⁰⁸ In order to join the pantheon he had created, his successor Joseph Stalin became 'Uncle Joe'. By 1934, Stalin was ready for the big time, prompting

the idealized Lenin [to be] relegated to the supporting role of Sacred Ancestor as the cult of Stalin took center stage in Soviet political ritual.

For the next two decades Lenin remained an object of organized reverence, but only within the context of the extravagant veneration of his 'worthy continuer'.¹⁰⁹

When Stalin was denounced in the Khrushchev years, Lenin was usefully reinvented as the friendlier *Dedushka* ('grandfather'). The *Komsomol* or 'Young Pioneers', children who were effectively communist boy and girl scouts, were now known as 'Lenin's grandchildren'.¹¹⁰

Threesomes are the hardest to manage. Those whose knowledge of the Indian independence movement was formed by David Attenborough's 1982 movie epic *Gandhi*, may be surprised to learn that the 'Father of the Indian Freedom Struggle', the 'father of Indian unrest' and the 'Father of India's Revolution' was Lokamanya Tilak¹¹¹ - which leaves the Mahatma and Jawaharlal Nehru nowhere to go. (Happily for Nehru, his daughter Indira Gandhi has no rival as 'Mother India'.¹¹²) By sub-titling his biography of Jack Kerouac 'King of the Beats', Barry Miles then had to find consolation prizes for

¹⁰⁷ Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, U S A, 1997, p.218

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, p.260

¹¹⁰ *ibid*

¹¹¹ Dhananjay Keer, *Lokamanya Tilak: Father of the Indian Freedom Struggle*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, title, and pp. 452 and 453 respectively

¹¹² Praynay Gupte, *Mother India: a Political Biography of Indira Gandhi*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1992, p.x

Kerouac's equals in the trinity of the so-called 'Beat Generation' writers.¹¹³ Allen Ginsberg thus became the 'godfather of the counterculture' and William Burroughs the 'hero of the underground-press revolutionaries', the latter title having apparently escaped the notice of the copyright division of the Soviet Politburo.

Australians have been schooled in 'parenthood' by their currency, which features 'Australian fathers': Sir Henry Parkes (federation), John Macarthur (wool),¹¹⁴ William Farrer (wheat)¹¹⁵ and Caroline Chisholm (charity, as the 'founding mother' of Australia¹¹⁶). These titles are at best dubious. How Macarthur and his nemesis William Bligh¹¹⁷ might have rubbed along slapped together in the Australian backpocket will never be known, Bligh having reputedly planted the first apple tree in Tasmania in 1788, making him, perhaps, the rightful 'father of the Australian apple industry'.¹¹⁸

Yet it is not always a case of 'first in, best dressed'. The title 'father of Australian exploration' apparently does not belong to James Cook, Willem Jansz, Abel Tasman, William Dampier or any of those silent European mariners who reputedly left mahogany ships and the odd cannon in the sands of the Australian coastline. The owner, it seems, is Charles Sturt.¹¹⁹ He was not the *first* Australian explorer, nor the most influential. Rather than *finding* Australia, he was, it seems, the first to find out what it contained.

So much for what Smith *was not*. James Smith himself is less well-known than his mine. Beneath the beard stood a wiry man who in his prime measured about six feet (185 centimetres) tall. He looked strong both in body and will, since the visible part of

¹¹³ Barry Miles, *Jack Kerouac: King of the Beats*, Virgin, London, 1998

¹¹⁴ See Margaret Steven, 'John Macarthur (1767-1834)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.153-9.

¹¹⁵ Archer Russell, in *William James Farrer: a Biography*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1949, p.11, refers to Farrer as the 'father of the Australian Wheat Industry'. See C W Wrigley, 'William James Farrer (1845-1906)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 8, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp.471-3.

¹¹⁶ Mary Hoban, *Caroline Chisholm: a Biography: Fifty-One Pieces of Wedding Cake*, 2nd edn., Polding Press, Melbourne, 1984, p.IX

¹¹⁷ See A G L Shaw, 'William Bligh (1754-1817)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.118-22.

¹¹⁸ Bligh's *Bounty* crew planted apple trees and other fruit trees and seeds at Adventure Bay, Bruny Island on 29 August 1788. See William Bligh, *A Voyage to the South Sea Undertaken by Command of His Majesty for the Purpose of Conveying the Bread-Fruit Tree to the West Indies...*, Australian Facsimile Editions, no. 121, Libraries Board of South Australia, Adelaide, 1969 (originally published 1792), p.49.

¹¹⁹ Michael Langley, *Sturt of the Murray: Father of Australian Exploration*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1969

his face was fixed in a 'thoughtful and resolute' expression.¹²⁰ His eyes were brown, as was his hair until it turned iron-grey (in sympathy, perhaps, with his mineral quest and his resolve) and receded from his forehead.¹²¹ The slight stoop which his sinewy frame wore late in life was the only outward reminder of his exertions in the highlands.¹²²

His inner life was lively: he was not graven from stone or a martyr. While Smith's prospecting career bears remarkable similarity to those of Queensland's James Venture Mulligan and New Zealand's George Fairweather Moonlight, who have been portrayed as selfless benefactors, in fact for him personal development and Tasmanian progress went hand in hand. His prospecting exploits reflected an achievement ethic and a love of bush exploration. This deeply religious man was not a dreamer in the sense of being unworldly, and after discovering the Mount Bischoff tin, he never wanted for money. He lived modestly (as always) but comfortably, giving liberally to worthy objects.

Probably the most famous quote about Smith is his son Ronald's that 'I cannot remember ever hearing him laugh, but occasionally he would smile at something amusing or pleasing.'¹²³ This should not be taken to mean he had no sense of humour. Certainly he was, as Henry Button called him, a 'peculiar' man,¹²⁴ honest to the point of bluntness (Edward Braddon referred to his 'obstinate' honesty¹²⁵) and highly principled. When one of his principles was offended, he smartly withdrew, although his most famous withdrawal - from the directorship of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company - was prompted by both what he saw as a betrayal of trust by his fellow directors and disgust at the mining regime they supported.

Smith was *not* the hapless or quixotic prospector of romance, who is swindled out of or abandons his rightful fortune. In fact, among Tasmanian prospectors he achieved almost unique wealth, power and status, a position approached only by Mount Lyell

¹²⁰ Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania', *Mercury* 29 March 1884

¹²¹ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith', p.5

¹²² The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff'

¹²³ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith', p.5

¹²⁴ Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p.302. Henry Button, journalist and author, was very influential in northern society. He was also Smith's friend and supporter throughout his Tasmanian mining career. See J C Horner, 'Henry Button (1829-1914)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.318-9.

¹²⁵ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.25

magnate James Crotty and perhaps by the Dally brothers, the original claimants on the Beaconsfield goldfield. He did not surrender his claim in poverty like the McDonoughs and Steve Karlson at Mount Lyell; he did not die before his discovery 'took off' like George Renison Bell or enter his dotage as a pauper among his beneficiaries like Frank Long at Zeehan;¹²⁶ and he did not bungle his big chance like the Murray brothers are reputed to have done at Balfour.¹²⁷ Even though he did not accumulate a great fortune from his find like Broken Hill's Charles Rasp,¹²⁸ however, Smith remains in the minority of prospectors who were socially and financially empowered by their own discoveries, that is, 'self-made' men.

It is true that Smith did not reap the full financial benefit of his great discovery. Why? Legend insists that early in the history of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company he relinquished his shares as an expression of disgust at the mining management - but the legend is wrong.¹²⁹ He resigned only his directorship on those grounds. Although it is true that, as Fenton suggests, he presented some shares to friends as gifts, most of them were sold at a low value before his disagreement with the Mount Bischoff directorship occurred.¹³⁰ The reasons he sold the shares are simple: he needed money, and he had greater faith in real estate than in mining scrip. Although - or, perhaps, *because* - he predicted that the mine would probably last for centuries (in the manner of Cornwall's Dolcoath tin and copper mine, which had vast underground lodes and was a consistent payer of small dividends), he could not have anticipated the 'skyrocketing' share price. In fact, Mount Bischoff proved to be a mine of a different kind. At the time of

¹²⁶ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p.50

¹²⁷ Bill and Tom Murray reputedly turned down a handsome offer to buy their Murray's Reward copper mine shortly before the lode gave out. According to Kerry Pink (*The West Coast Story*, p.134), Bill Murray committed suicide as the result of the mine's collapse, while Tom became a lonely wanderer until his death in the 1920s.

¹²⁸ See A Coulls, 'Charles Rasp (1846-1907)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, p.9. See also (ed. Geoffrey Blainey), *If I Remember Rightly: the Memoirs of W S Robinson 1876-1963*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1967.

¹²⁹ This legend is perpetuated in, for example, E L Martin, in D I Groves et al, *A Century of Tin Mining at Mount Bischoff, 1871-1971*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 54, Tasmanian Department of Mines, Hobart, 1972, p.20; A Geoffrey Horner, *Tasmanian Journey*, Cat & Fiddle, Hobart, 1974, p.64; Pink, *And Wealth for Toil*, p.321.

¹³⁰ James Fenton, *Bush Life in Tasmania 50 Years Ago*, C L Richmond, Devonport, 1964 (originally published 1891), p.168

Smith's death his estate was worth about £8,000.¹³¹ At the mine's peak in January 1888, his original share allotment, with dividends accrued to that time, would have been worth about £640,000.¹³² At his death the same calculation would have fetched about £680,000, added dividends cancelling out the declining share price.¹³³ Ironically, after the death of this theoretical millionaire (in dollar terms), members of the Smith family instigated legal proceedings in hope of claiming a fortune from the phantom estate of his stepfather.¹³⁴

Overall, Smith was not a good businessman. Early in his business career he was ultra-cautious, probably the result of his early financial stringency. While he must be given credit for successfully negotiating the sale of the Mount Bischoff tin mine in 1873, by selling out of Mount Bischoff to buy property he gained security for his family but lost a fortune. That security tempered Smith's caution. Once his family's financial position was safe he became a liberal mining investor and philanthropist, appearing to value money only for the good it could do. Smith came to believe doggedly that mining would be the making of Tasmania, but while mining did bring the colony prosperity there were some failures along the way. His over-optimism about silver ventures and faith in the Cornish notion that lodes 'lived down' misled investors, demonstrating that sometimes no amount of the study for which he was famous could suffice for practical experience. In the 1890s Smith himself lost heavily trying to open up silver-lead mines in the face of economic depression. His response was not to withdraw, but to defy the adverse conditions, selling land to raise more funds in search of a new Mount Bischoff which would at once repay his efforts and benefit his homeland.¹³⁵

Smith's legacy was something far greater than a still substantial family nest egg. From the 1870s Tasmanians generally benefited from the effects of the tin discovery. The example of what one man alone could achieve stirred Tasmanian industriousness. Property values and commerce increased. Foreign investment became more easily

¹³¹ Letters of Administration of the Lands and Goods etc of James Smith, no. 336, 8 June 1897, Supreme Court of Tasmania, Hobart

¹³² assuming a selling price of £76 per share

¹³³ assuming a selling price of £33 per share

¹³⁴ See Chapter 1.

obtainable. Burnie developed as the port and railhead for most of the west coast mines; Launceston thrived on a mining boom. With this impetus the west and north-west coasts pushed ahead quickly, the former developing into one of the world's great mining districts. One-hundred-and-thirty-one years since the discovery of Mount Bischoff tin, production of this mineral continues on a large scale, the Mount Bischoff and Renison tin mines together having yielded more than twenty million tonnes of ore.

Smith was not Tasmania's 'economic saviour', but he rejuvenated its economy and prompted profound economic and social change. How this dominant figure came to be is an intriguing story.

¹³⁵ Smith to William Law 21 September 1894 no. 297, NS234/2/18; Smith to William Gibson junior 9 January 1895 no. 399, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

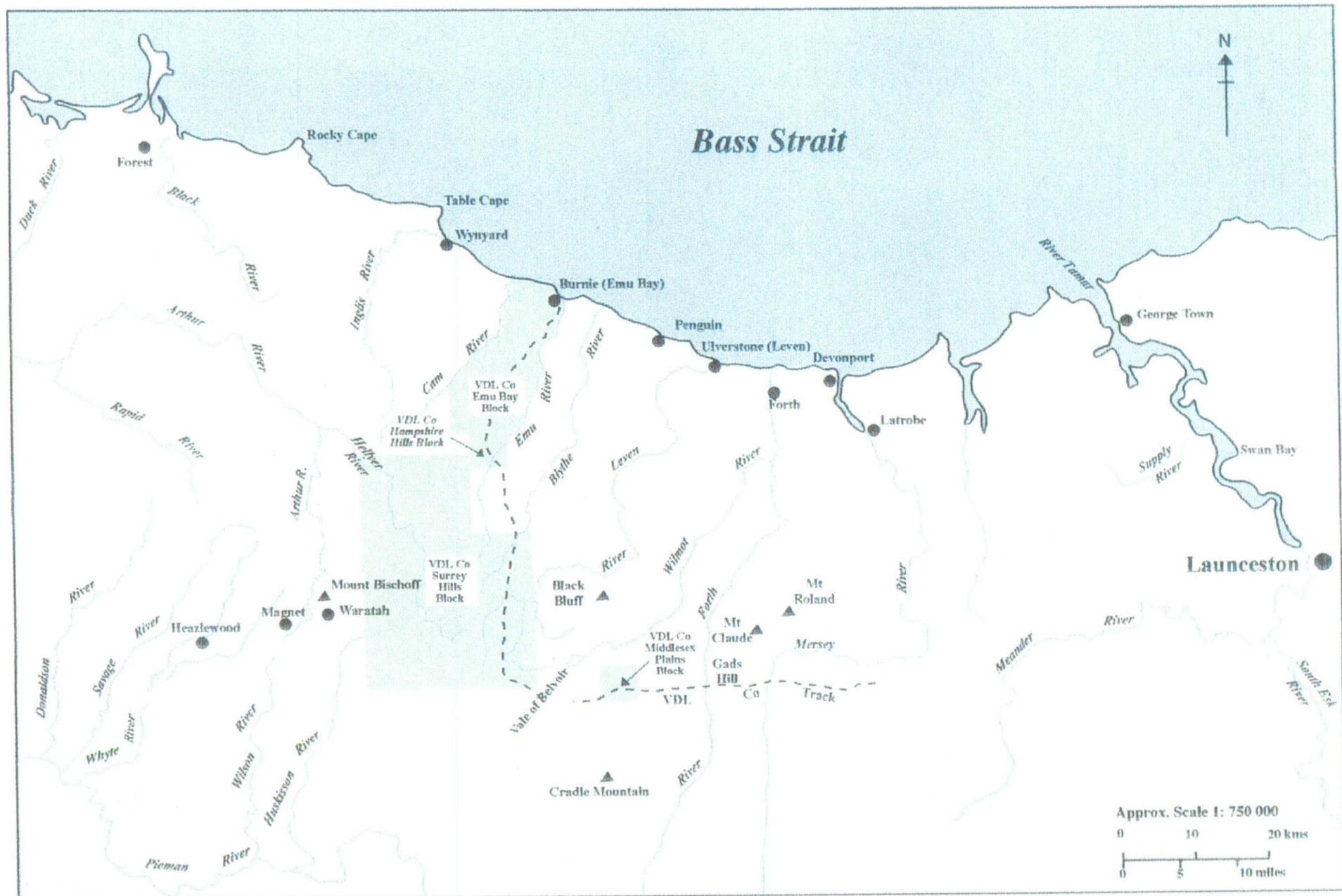


Fig. 2 North West Coast Location Map

Part I: Formative Years

Chapter 1: Beginnings on the Tamar River

Childhood and adolescence: the spur of ambition

In 1827 European settlement in northern Van Diemen's Land was barely two decades old. One of its flagpoles, a penal station called George Town, had virtually been abandoned to the Bass Strait westerlies. Since 1824 the Union Jack had flown instead upstream at Launceston, where the North and South Esk Rivers passed into the long estuary of the Tamar.¹ This was the entrepot of the north. Graziers, merchants and Bass Strait sealers alike wallowed in Launceston's unmade streets, haggled on its wharves and rollicked in its pubs.² Even the Van Diemen's Land Company, sole white proprietor in the north-west, predicated its tenuous survival upon creeping a stocktrack to this tiny marketplace 150 kilometres away through the highlands.³

Back-breaking labour, solitude and isolation were hazards enough for novice farmers, but there were more. Escaped convicts (half the population were transported criminals) reappeared menacingly as bushrangers. Violent conflict between whites and blacks preceded the final actions of the 'Black War' (including George Robinson's 'Friendly Mission'⁴), which almost eliminated Aboriginal culture from the island. By 1831, about two million acres of former tribal lands would be granted to settlers.⁵

¹ Llewelyn Slingsby Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple: Life and Work in Northern Tasmania*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1957, pp.27 and 57

² *ibid*, pp.68-77

³ C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, p.47

⁴ See Plomley, N J B (ed.), *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association,

When Van Diemens' Land Company surveyor Henry Hellyer⁶ clambered around the scrubby foothills of Mount Bischoff in search of grazing land in February 1827, the man who would make the small peak famous was snuggled in his mother's womb by the River Tamar. Ann Smith (nee Grant, also known as Ann Rutherford), an illiterate 27-year-old Northumbrian, formerly a servant and literally a handkerchief thief (she also stole a watch seal and a purse), would soon add baby James⁷ to 2-year-old John.⁸ A third child, Mary Ann (Mary), would follow at the same interval. Since arriving in the Australian colonies in 1820, Ann had worked as an assigned servant at Liverpool, New South Wales, and at Hobart, before being transferred in 1823 to the George Town 'Female Factory', the inmates of which were probably then occupied making cloth from coarse wool and leather for shoes.⁹

Like Ann, her 35-year-old husband John had been transported from England as a convict.¹⁰ A Protestant Irishman from Cork, who had been convicted in Devon in 1816 of stealing clothing from a ship, the seaman had graduated to bigger and better things in his role of coxswain of commander Lieutenant Colonel Cimitiere's boat at George Town: in 1818 he stole this and a smaller boat in aid of a notorious bushranger.¹¹

James Boyce has described a 'Vandemonian' culture which peaked in the years 1813 to 1817.¹² He claims that at a time when the kangaroo was the most important source of food and clothing in Van Diemen's Land,¹³ escaped convicts and white hunters living in the bush established an integrated existence with the Aboriginal

Hobart, 1966; and N J B Plomley, 'George Augustus Robinson (1788-1866)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.385-7.

⁵ W A Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood 1803-1945*, St David's Park, Hobart, 1991, p.13

⁶ See Shirley M Eldershaw, 'Henry Hellyer (1792-1832)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.528-9; and Binks, *Explorers*, pp.40-2, 59-69, 79-83 and 91-112.

⁷ Smith's date of birth is given as 1 July 1827 on his baptism record, no. 249/3218, 2 October 1829 (AOT).

⁸ Birth record no. 859 3/10/1825, Parish of George Town (AOT)

⁹ J G Branagan, *George Town: History of the Town and District*, Regal, Launceston, undated, p.21

¹⁰ For John Smith's convict record, see CON31/38, CON13/1, p.96 and CON78; for Ann Grant's see CON40/3 (AOT).

¹¹ CON31/38 (AOT)

¹² James Boyce, 'Journeying Home: a New Look at the British Invasion of Van Diemen's Land: 1803-1823', *Island*, Autumn 1996, pp.38-63

¹³ *ibid*, p.43

population through the medium of their black wives¹⁴ - although this is possibly a generalisation based on a few examples. The greatest symbol of the near triumph of this culture, according to Boyce, was Michael Howe, an outlaw who challenged the authority of British government as the 'Lieutenant Governor of the Woods' or 'Governor of the Ranges'.¹⁵ Having lost or betrayed his Aboriginal partner, and increasingly harried by bounty-hunters, though, Howe had now decided to flee his bush domain.

The goal of hijacking the boat was to rescue Howe and escape the colony with him. John Smith did not lead the plot, and it is possible that he was only invited to join it because he had access to the launch and could manage it on the sea (his job appears to have included ferrying provisions between George Town and Launceston). He was one of nine prisoners who had come under the influence of an assignee named Eli Beagent (or Begent), who had gained a ticket-of-leave only a few days before the escape plan was executed. Beagent had been a bushranger with Howe, a relationship perhaps forged on their transport ship, the *Indefatigable*, in 1812.¹⁶ Howe's mercurial highwayman's ability to raid distant settlements almost simultaneously and his threat to bail up the mail service had panicked the colony.¹⁷ The party of Captain James Kelly, on their exploratory circumnavigation of the island, had felt the rising paranoia when they were arrested at George Town on suspicion of being Howe's gang, which was then believed to be waiting to hijack an outbound vessel at the Tamar Heads.¹⁸

Howe could have been the prisoners' redemption. The price on his head was 100 guineas, a free pardon and a passage home to England - a virtual turning back of the clock.¹⁹ So strong was the call of the wild or Howe's charisma, however, that instead they chose to join him, presumably pursuing the Vandemonian ideal beyond the reach of

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.54

¹⁵ T E Wells, *Michael Howe: the Last and Worst of the Bushrangers of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart, 1818, p.10

¹⁶ See CON 13/1 for Howe, and CON 23/1 for Beagent (AOT).

¹⁷ John West, *History of Tasmania*, Launceston, Henry Dowling, Launceston, 1852, pp.131-8

¹⁸ Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple*, p.41

¹⁹ Lieutenant Governor Sorell to Governor Macquarie, in (ed. Frederick Watson), *Historical Records of Australia*, Library Committee of the Commonwealth Parliament, Sydney, 1921, series III, vol. 2, 23 May 1818, pp.319-20; *Hobart Town Gazette* 6 December 1817, p.1

British power.²⁰ The Lieutenant Governor learned of the plot, but allowed it to proceed in hope of landing his high country equivalent. Smith and another convict, James Flynn, finally surrendered in a starving condition to soldiers and the crew of the *Rosetta*.²¹ Smith's punishment suggests that he was either forced to participate in the plot, or that his privations, surrender and, perhaps, previous good behaviour gained him official sympathy. While his fellow absconders copped a flogging and additional time, in most cases to be served in Newcastle, Smith's three-year Newcastle stretch was rescinded, and he was conditionally pardoned three years later, after working 'on the stores' in Launceston.²²

Someone must have been looking after John Smith. By 1825 he had accumulated 50 head of cattle, and in that year he received two grants. He married the pregnant Ann,²³ and accommodated her on the 30 acres for which he had successfully applied at Swan Bay on the eastern Tamar. Smith testified to Lieutenant Governor Arthur that 'since his arrival (on these shores) no single instance of complaint against him has occurred'. That this claim went unchallenged and that Commandant Cameron assessed him as 'an honest, sober man of very industrious habits' suggests greased palms, great generosity or extraordinary incompetence.²⁴

This came at a time when, according to Boyce, small grants to ex-convicts and the poor ceased in favour of large grants to wealthy, free-born immigrants as sheep pasture. A glance at the Dorset County chart²⁵ confirms this: John Smith's small Tamar frontage looks as if it is being pressed to walk the plank by his larger neighbours. The British social structure was being imposed on a colony which had gained dangerous delusions of egalitarianism. 'This invasion,' Boyce writes of the free-born grantees,

was very different from the first: this time there would be no negotiation,
no interaction and minimal change on the part of the Europeans. The

²⁰ Sorell to Macquarie, *Historical Records of Australia*, ibid

²¹ *Hobart Town Gazette* 2 May 1818 (additional supplement)

²² *Hobart Town Gazette* 23 May 1818; CON 31/38 (AOT)

²³ Marriage record no. 249/3216, 3 October 1825. County of Cornwall, Parish of St John (AOT). Ann Grant probably had not been granted a ticket-of-leave before she married.

²⁴ John Smith's petition to Governor Arthur, CSO1/374/8544 (AOT)

²⁵ Parish of Sherbourne chart no. 2, County of Dorset (AOT)

new invaders' claim on the land, they were to make very clear, was for keeps.²⁶

The clearing and occupation of the old Aboriginal hunting-grounds destroyed the economic base of Vandemonian culture and brought the new landed white gentry into direct conflict with the Aborigines. 'War' would rage from 1823 to 1831.²⁷

Many years later, John Smith's grant would be absorbed into a property called Woodlawn. This name, had it been applied in the 1820s, would have captured the half-tamed lifestyle along an estuary frequented by escaped convicts, threatened Aborigines and, mostly, by fear of these attackers.²⁸ The names of the nearby features Bradys Lookout and Native Point tell the story. As noted previously, the Tamar was favoured by bushrangers as their gateway to freedom. The colony's most famous bandit Matthew Brady²⁹ had hesitated fatally with the brig *Glory* anchored before him on the Tamar during his 1826 northern campaign.³⁰ After years of raids up and down this river,³¹ Samuel Britton's gang was eliminated at Port Sorell in 1835 following a police chase east from Kelso Bay near the Tamar mouth, where the bandit had been spied apparently awaiting an escape vessel.³² The isolated homes flanked by water and forest along the Tamar verges were also easy targets for such marauders. In 1831, when an adventurous Henry Reed reached the western shore from his overturned rowboat opposite Swan Bay, he walked for five or six hours through bush before striking a hut.³³

Plomley records 22 Aboriginal attacks on whites, causing eight deaths, in the Tamar River region for the period 1825 to 1831, after which time few Aborigines

²⁶ Boyce, 'Journeying Home', p.55

²⁷ *ibid*, p.54

²⁸ Woodlawn was subdivided for housing in the 1980s.

²⁹ See L L Robson, 'Matthew Brady (Bready) (1799-1826)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.147-8.

³⁰ *Colonial Times* 10 March 1826, p.2. For Brady's northern campaign generally, see, for instance, *Colonial Times* 17 March 1826, p.3 and 24 March 1826, p.4. For a concise history see Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of a Life in England and Tasmania*, A W Birchall and Sons, Launceston, 1909, pp.409-15.

³¹ For Britton's gang see, for example, 'The Bushrangers', *Launceston Advertiser* 24 October 1833; 'Daring Outrage', *Launceston Advertiser* 19 December 1833. For a concise history see Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, pp.405-9.

³² 'The Bushrangers - Death of Three Men', *Launceston Advertiser* 5 February 1835; 'Further and Authentic Particulars Respecting the Bushrangers', *Cornwall Chronicle* 14 February 1835

³³ Henry Reed, *Incidents in an Eventful Life*, Morgan and Scott, London, 1908, p.8

remained to continue such attacks (Plomley's estimate of the total Tasmanian Aboriginal population in 1831 is 350; Hull's 190.)³⁴ The Smith cottage is believed to have featured a palisade designed to help repel Aboriginal attackers.³⁵ The frequent clashes in this region suggest that it was probably used while James Smith and his family occupied the farm, although he recorded no such incidents. In July 1828 a servant of the nearby settler Captain George Coulston was fatally speared.³⁶ A sawyer suffered the same fate at Swan Bay in 1830.³⁷ In the following year a group of Aborigines were shot dead in retaliation for *repeated* Aboriginal raids on the George Town shopkeeper William Kneal's (or Kneale's) Swan Bay farm,³⁸ which adjoined the Smith property; repeated attacks also prefaced the murder of Michael Fitzgerald close by near Dilston.³⁹ Both James Smith's later childhood abodes on the Tamar had been attacked by Aborigines and bushrangers prior to his arrival.⁴⁰

Smith's childhood was certainly wretched and almost certainly violent. In 1828 John Smith was described as 'Free. Farmer, East Tamar. Character indifferent' on the Return of Children in the Colony. In 1830 a charge of wife-beating against him was dismissed;⁴¹ in the following year Ann was acquitted of a fraud charge.⁴² Then, in 1831 or 1832, at a pivotal time in his younger son's life, John Smith fled or died. The commonness of his name makes tracing his fate almost impossible: the Tamar-Launceston region abounded in John Smiths. A Dr John Smith and a Captain John

³⁴ N J B Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1831*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1992, pp.29 and 60-100; H M Hull, *Statistical Summary of Tasmania from the Year 1816 to 1865 Inclusive*, Hobart, 1866; cited in Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p.25

³⁵ R M Green, 'Richard Green (1808-78)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.288-9. Richard Green lived in the cottage at Swan Bay after the Smiths vacated it. He would later be associated with James Smith's Penguin and Mount Bischoff mining ventures, being the first chairman of directors of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company.

³⁶ Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p.70; *Hobart Town Courier* 1 August 1828

³⁷ Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp.75, 84 and 93

³⁸ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 4 April 1831, p.342

³⁹ Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p.98

⁴⁰ Jonathan Griffiths's house: Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p.65; *Launceston Advertiser* 13 July 1829; *Australian* 16 January 1828, cited on Griffiths family website www.acon.com.au. Supply mill: Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp.65 and 78; 'B', 'Our Early Mills and Millers', *Examiner* 17 July 1886, (James Smith), 'An Episode of Early Days', *Examiner* 20 September 1886

⁴¹ CON31/38 (AOT)

⁴² CON 40/3 (AOT)

Smith lived at George Town; another settled at Marchington, near present-day Breadalbane. In 1829 there was this newspaper item:

We have just heard that an assigned servant to Mr John Smith on the Tamar River, has cut his throat, hopes are entertained of his ultimate recovery.⁴³

This must have been one of the other John Smiths along the river. James Smith's father might have duped the authorities once, but persuading Lieutenant Governor Arthur that he was a free settler - which is what it would have taken to be assigned convict servants - is another matter. Nor could he have changed pigment, in order to be the 'black' seaman John Smith arrested in April 1833 in familiar circumstances - stealing a hat - on a ship sailing between Launceston and George Town.⁴⁴

Two letters from the attorney-general to Smith in 1857 suggest that he (Smith) thought that his father had been shot dead in about 1831,⁴⁵ and a story persists that he was murdered by cattle duffers.⁴⁶ Other tales handed down by Smith descendants have him, alternately, speared to death by Aborigines and shot by a sea captain.⁴⁷ The shooting sounds like romantic fiction, and the spearing story is probably an assumption that the cottage palisade was used. Plomley lists the murder by Aborigines of three John Smiths, but none of them died at the Tamar or can be identified as James Smith's father.⁴⁸

Nor can the subject or subjects of other 1830s reports be certainly identified as John Smith of Swan Bay.⁴⁹ Two John Smiths died in Tasmania in 1834 (one in Hobart,

⁴³ *Launceston Advertiser* 7 December 1829

⁴⁴ RS8/E10 (Royal Society collection, University of Tasmania Archive)

⁴⁵ CSO1/122a: p.75 (AOT). The letters (4 September 1857, no. 47 and 23 December 1857, no. 51, NS234/3/1 [AOT]) suggest that a man named Richard Trunks was tried for John Smith's murder but acquitted, and that men named Laberty and Reece were also implicated. There is no record of the case in either the Launceston Police Office Memorandum Book (POL446/1) or the Launceston Police Office Register of Charges Laid (POL451/3) (AOT).

⁴⁶ Ronald Smith letter 28 March 1963, NS234/9/9 (AOT)

⁴⁷ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson, James Smith's great granddaughter, 6 January 2001

⁴⁸ Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp.63, 78, 87 and 88

⁴⁹ See, for instance, 'Five Pounds Reward', *Colonial Times* 19 August 1834, p.1; and 'Hobart Town Police Report', *Colonial Times* 23 September 1834, pp.306-7.

the other in Launceston⁵⁰), but neither was shot or murdered, while a John Smith whose drunkenness convictions invoked a Launceston convict record in the same year was probably not the *authentic* John Smith, whose George Town convict record did not receive these additional blemishes. Another sea-faring John Smith flits tantalisingly through George Augustus Robinson's diaries: it is possible that James Smith's father retreated to Bass Strait as a sealer. Robinson first encountered John Smith the sealer at Gun Carriage Island in March 1831,⁵¹ just three months after the last convict record entry by which we can definitely pinpoint John Smith of Swan Bay. Although the sealer's physical description - five feet, eight inches tall, with brown hair⁵² - matches that of James Smith's father, he is exonerated by a convincing alibi and the unlikelihood that a fleeing John Smith would retain his own name. There is no evidence to confirm any of these stories, and another potential lead - that John Smith's real surname was McArthie - comes from a most unreliable source, James Smith's sister Mary, noted for her efforts to cover up her convict origins.⁵³

It is possible that Ann and John Smith separated in 1832 or 1833. John may have fled Van Diemen's Land when summoned to the Supreme Court to answer a sheep-stealing charge in February 1832.⁵⁴ He could easily have fulfilled his old ambition to leave the colony and join the bush brotherhood - this time without a trace.

The Tamar was no place for a lone mother, and Ann probably sought refuge with neighbours, friends, a new partner or, perhaps, even in a housekeeping position which accommodated her and her children. The loss of a parent probably caused the four-or-five-year-old James trauma and emotional insecurity. Not only was his life probably thrown into chaos, but he was at an impressionable age: loss of his father at this time may only have intensified Smith's identification with a figure he had idealised. In

⁵⁰ Hobart burials 3537/1834, 16 June 1834 (AOT); and Inquest CEN 195/1 no. 20 (AOT) respectively

⁵¹ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p.331

⁵² *ibid*, p.326

⁵³ Julius Rohr to Mary Jane Smith 3 September 1907, no. 2273, NS234/5/6 (AOT)

⁵⁴ The final entry on John Smith's convict record is a charge of killing a sheep with intent to sell part of the carcass: he was bailed in December 1830. Presumably it was the same John Smith who was 'called upon his recognizances but did not appear' to contest a charge of sheep stealing in February 1832 ('Supreme Court', *Colonial Times* 22 February 1832), although the latter event is not mentioned on his convict record.

addition, according to Weller and Weller, 37 percent of children who experience the death of a parent satisfy criteria for 'major depression' in the three months afterward.⁵⁵ Since Smith believed, rightly or wrongly, that his father had died, this may have been his experience too.

When the future Scottish 'self-improver' Hugh Miller lost the father he worshipped at the age of five, he adopted Sir Walter Scott as a 'father-substitute' or authority figure, and sought in stories, romances and histories, 'a sense of place in a world governed, as juvenile tales are, by simple morality and justice'.⁵⁶ The Victorian age, according to Davison,

was an age of hero-worship when the qualities of the heroic individual set the standard of morality and patriotism. Heroes stood for something more than themselves and won admiration by triumphing over circumstances.⁵⁷

The British heroes of the day with whom children were regaled were Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington. The young Smith had several authority figures, however satisfactory or unsatisfactory they proved to be. While it is easy to imagine him escaping from an unpleasant reality into a world of the 'Boys' Own' style of books, it is doubtful that Smith was literate at an early age.

He recorded little about his infancy. Given the troubled circumstances this is not surprising, but perhaps he also tried to block it out. Unfortunately, potentially enlightening correspondence with his siblings - especially with his older brother, John - much later in life is missing. Smith did divulge a few early memories to his friend Arthur Sinclair, however, who recalled a lecture he had given about Smith's life, in Scotland. The description of it started from

⁵⁵ E B and R A Weller, 'Grief in Children and Adolescents', in (ed. B Garfinkel, G Carlson and E Weller) *Psychiatric Disorders in Children and Adolescents*, W B Saunders, Philadelphia, 1990, p.242

⁵⁶ Michael Shortland, 'Bonneted Mechanic and Narrative Hero: the Self-Modelling of Hugh Miller', in (ed. Michael Shortland), *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, pp.37, 41 and 43-4

⁵⁷ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, New South Wales, 2000, p.22

the morning he woke up in a strange house wondering where they had carried him to. Till the day he was set to watch the poor possums and saw them wriggle out at the chimney! - how the work man carried him shoulder high, and then I pictured him sitting reading to him...⁵⁸

Who were 'they', these agents of Smith's move - his mother and a man or, perhaps, his mother and siblings? 'They' may be just a figure of speech, rather than an indication that at least two adults controlled Smith's life at this time. Smith responded to Sinclair:

My having been taken to a strange place is...one of my earliest recollections. But I was taken to two strange places in opposite directions within a short period - a few weeks I think though it might have been longer.

Smith adds tantalisingly:

There is much connected with my early life which I did not tell you.⁵⁹

One of my earliest recollections. It can reasonably be assumed that these 'two strange places' represent departure from the Smith farm at Swan Bay after John Smith's disappearance or death. Smith's mother is known to have later married Jonathan Griffiths,⁶⁰ but the description above suggests a two-stage move from Swan Bay to Griffiths's Freshwater Point home nearby on the Tamar. Smith's notes include this childhood experience:

I once saw Mr [George] Robinson when conducting a party of natives from the bush. He brought them to a house where I was staying.

This was temporary accommodation: Smith uses the word 'staying' rather than 'residing' or 'living at'. This house is probably the first of the two 'strange places' to which he was taken 'in opposite directions within a short period'. That this is the earliest recollection of Aborigines contained in his notes, suggests that he did not recall attacks on the house at Swan Bay. Smith continues:

⁵⁸ Arthur Sinclair to Mary Jane Smith 17 July 1890, no. 183, NS234/3/18 (AOT)

⁵⁹ Smith to Arthur Sinclair 10 July 1890, no. 401, NS234/3/18 (AOT). Since Sinclair's letter preceded this one, one or the other must be wrongly dated.

[The Aborigines] seemed highly pleased and friendly. They all walked into the principal and somewhat spacious room of the house and all seating themselves, some of the aborigines sitting on the floor. I do not remember seeing a white woman in the house on this occasion. Those of the establishment had probably retired to their rooms or were absent.

If this was a Robinson party en route to Launceston (and Smith does not seem to trust absolutely his 'very vivid recollections'), the options are straightforward. On five occasions Robinson's party made a stop during a voyage between George Town and Launceston or vice versa. In October 1830 they stayed overnight 'three parts of the way to Launceston';⁶¹ six months later they appear to have retired to 'Gilders's [Gildas's] farm' at Stoney Creek.⁶² A week after that, Robinson and a few Aborigines halted at sawyer's huts on the western Tamar, before continuing on next day to George Town.⁶³ In September 1831 two Tasmanian Aborigines and two Sydney Aborigines in Robinson's care put on a spear-throwing contest, presumably on the banks of the Tamar, while awaiting the turn of the tide.⁶⁴ In November 1832 Robinson stayed overnight at William Kneal's house in George Town (rather than Kneal's property at Swan Bay).⁶⁵

All but the last of these stopovers are probably earlier than the encounter Smith describes. Only the last, moreover, satisfies the requirement of 'two strange places...in opposite directions': if Griffiths's house, up river from Swan Bay, is the *second* strange place, then the *first*, presumably, was down river, that is, toward the sea from Swan Bay. There is, though, another clue in Smith's notes about the Aboriginal party:

...no one seemed afraid of them, or they of any one; though I remember that but a short time previously the men of the place rushed into the house and intimating that the 'natives' were near prepared to resist and attack as desired the women and children myself included lay down on

⁶⁰ See 'Jonathan Griffiths (1766?-1839)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.485-7.

⁶¹ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 1 October 1830, p.222

⁶² *ibid*, 16 April 1831, p.342

⁶³ *ibid*, 23 April 1831, p.345

⁶⁴ *ibid*, 18 September 1831, p.428

the floor. One of the male inmates watched the natives from a window and described their movements till they retired into the bush and then the danger was considered past.⁶⁶

No shot was fired, Smith recalled, at the threatening Aborigines.

This forbearance is the more remarkable from the fact that the farther [sic] of the young man who was the proprietor of the farm on the occasion in question was mortally wounded by the spears of natives while he was reading the Bible in front of the house.⁶⁷

To summarise, there had been three visits of Aborigines to the house: on the first occasion, the owner's father had been murdered; on the second, when Smith was present, the occupants had taken cover but no shots were fired in defence; on the third (which he specifies as a few days after the second), Smith had observed Robinson's party being hospitably received. The man who was killed while reading the Bible was Michael Fitzgerald, in April 1831.⁶⁸ The Fitzgerald cottage was *up* river from Swan Bay, on the opposite bank but effectively in the same direction as Griffiths's house, but at least Smith can be placed in the Fitzgerald house some time after April 1831. His deserted mother perhaps sought refuge there from the perils of the frontier - or was there another connection? Intriguingly, in 1831 the sealer John Smith's daughter, Nancy Brown, lived briefly with Fitzgerald before her father took her to Gun Carriage Island.⁶⁹ The party of Aborigines, whom Smith probably mistakenly recalls being led by Robinson, eventually

retired to a grassy plot and collecting sticks made fires on which they singed and partly roasted several kangaroos. This done the kangaroo were taken from the fires and then commenced a process of cutting twisting and tearing as each aboriginal secured a portion of the food. Much of this was apparently in a perfectly raw state. It seemed however

⁶⁵ *ibid*, 6 and 7 November 1832, p.678

⁶⁶ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

⁶⁷ Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT)

⁶⁸ The *Hobart Town Courier* 16 April and 23 April 1831 reports that Fitzgerald was speared while 'sitting reading at his cottage door'. On the former occasion he is described as 'a poor old man', which fits in with him being the father of the settler.

to afford the utmost relish as it was devoured with the sole aid of hands and teeth.

The manner of the natives was such that I experienced little or no fear...till I was seized and held towards the native by a white man with an order for him to do with me as he had done with the kangaroo [which had been roasted]. The 'native' instantly clutched me in his strong naked arms. My terror was indescribable. I thought that I had been inveigled into the clutches of a 'bogeyman' to whom some girls had previously threatened to give me. I struggled and screamed till I found myself on my feet and then I ran off and saw no more of those aborigines.⁷⁰

Smith's next encounter with a Tasmanian Aborigine places him as a resident of Jonathan Griffiths's house at Freshwater Point in 1833 or 1834. (His notes specify these years, and confirm it with 'when I was a boy of about six years' and 'about 8 years before the Aborigines were taken at Woolnorth' [actually the Arthur River] - which was in 1842⁷¹). It is likely that in late 1833 or in 1834 Ann Smith had taken up with this industrious land-owner, ship-builder, shipping merchant, sealer, whaler and, apparently, civil engineer, who, before he was any of these, at a callow fifteen, had been given seven years in the antipodes for stealing clothes - putting him on equal footing with the Smiths.⁷² He would do much better than them as an emancipist. On Norfolk Island he had met a transported Dublin thief, Elinor McDonald, with whom he had taken up residence.⁷³ Long after the expiration of his sentence, in 1820 Griffiths had sailed his numerous dependants, and presumably Elinor, to the Tamar on his vessel the *Maid of Richmond*.⁷⁴ The Gloucestershireman bought his first land at Freshwater Point in 1821;

⁶⁹ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, note 109, p.446

⁷⁰ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT). Smith's recollection of this event makes interesting comparison to a *Mercury* story reported in the *Examiner* ('Old Recollections', 21 March 1871, p.3).

⁷¹ Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT); Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p.927

⁷² Griffiths family website, www.acon.com.au

⁷³ Portia Robinson, *The Women of Botany Bay*, Penguin, Sydney, 1995, p.114

⁷⁴ Griffiths family file (Devonport Maritime Museum)

by 1833 his construction of the North Esk bridge in Launceston had earned him a further 4,500 acres in the same locality.⁷⁵

Jonathan Griffiths and James Smith: what an unlikely pair of tycoons. Who could have foreseen, when the sixty-year-old took in the six-year-old, both casualties of England's overburdened or over-zealous penal system, that one day members of the Smith family would seek in a phantom inheritance the fortune they had been denied by his stepson, the tin 'king' James Smith? Convictism was probably a spur to both their 'fortunes'.

Griffiths needed wealth. Even without Ann Smith's three children, his 'family' was a tribe or an orphanage. Griffiths himself is believed to have been orphaned, which may explain his sympathy for waifs and refugees. A New South Wales girl named Elizabeth Kirby was brought up by the Griffithses:⁷⁶ she was perhaps one of the 'young family of [orphaned] grandchildren' Jonathan claimed to have brought from that colony.⁷⁷ In 1831 a seven-year-old 'half-caste' Aboriginal girl, Catherine Anderson, daughter of a sealer named Black Jack Anderson, was also in his care.⁷⁸ In addition, at least three of his own seven sons by the late Elinor McDonald (she had died in New South Wales in 1831⁷⁹) were still children in need of a mother.⁸⁰ A widow named Jane Hooper appears to have been doing the job when she died in 1833.⁸¹ That Jane was Griffiths's de facto wife is suggested by an advertisement which names him as the beneficiary of her possessions unless other claimants came forward (she died intestate).⁸²

Ann Smith was Jane Hooper's replacement. The abandoned or widowed mother probably now had seven children in her care, including Jane Hooper Griffiths, her

⁷⁵ Griffiths family website; E Whitfield, 'Early Launceston: Mr Whitfield's Lecture', *Examiner* July 3 1897, pp.6 and 7

⁷⁶ Griffiths family website

⁷⁷ CSO1/787/16803 (AOT)

⁷⁸ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, note 107, p.446

⁷⁹ Portia Robinson, *The Women of Botany Bay*, p.114

⁸⁰ information recorded by Mary Jane Smith in 1907 (see no. 2314, NS234/5/6, AOT) which she probably obtained from Mary Ann Mark (nee Smith).

⁸¹ Death certificate register no. 3244/34 (AOT). Jane Hooper drowned by falling off a boat into the Tamar river while intoxicated on 20 July 1833 (*Launceston Advertiser* 5 September 1833). Smith identifies Jane Hooper as the 'Mrs Griffiths' who defended Jonathan Griffiths's house when it was allegedly attacked by the bushrangers Thomas Bevan and Charles Williams in January 1828. See *Australian* 16 January 1828, quoted on Griffiths family website, and Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT).

predecessor's daughter.⁸³ This may have been a heavy price to pay for security, if that is what Jonathan represented to her. While passion for this husband almost twice her age (sixty compared to thirty-three in 1833) cannot be ruled out, in her circumstances it was probably a luxury. It is more likely that, like Jane Hooper before her, she craved a wealthy benefactor, and he a youthful mate and mother to his mixed brood.

The Smith and Griffiths families had probably become acquainted through living near each other or through the shipping trade. Anxious presumably to blot out her convict 'shame', James's sister Mary later invented a prior bond between the families, as Ronald Smith recalled:

She told us that her father [John Smith] was pressed into the navy and was on the Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. Her father was an ordinary seaman. On the ship was Jonathan Griffiths, who was a commissioned officer. In spite of the difference in rank they became friends. This friendship they kept up later in Tasmania. This led to Griffiths marrying my grandmother [Ann Smith] after my grandfather's [John Smith's] death.⁸⁴

Another Mary tale has John Smith assuming that name (his real surname was supposedly McArthie) and absconding to Australia to escape redress after fighting a duel in the Duke of Wellington's army.⁸⁵ The name change, if not the reason given for it, is plausible: more than fifty John Smiths were transported to Tasmania, making it almost the ultimate anonymity. Similar tales were spread in hope of obscuring Jonathan Griffiths's convict record.⁸⁶ It is possible that in reality the closest these men came to sharing a vessel was when Griffiths's boat the *Rosetta* was used to apprehend the absconding coxswain in the 1818 Michael Howe affair.⁸⁷

⁸² *Launceston Advertiser* 17 November 1834

⁸³ According to the *Tasmanian Pioneers Index*, Jane Hooper Griffiths had at least six children with George Jones, the first in 1850. She was probably a young child when her mother drowned in 1833.

⁸⁴ letter written by Ronald Smith 28 March 1963, NS234/9/9 (AOT); see also Julius Rohr to Mary Jane Smith 12 September 1907, NS234/5/6 (AOT)

⁸⁵ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson

⁸⁶ *ibid*

⁸⁷ Sorell to Macquarie, *Historical Records of Australia*, series III, vol. 2, 23 May 1818, pp.319-20

Mary appears to have concocted an alibi for her mother as well:

Lucy Anne Lumley married Dr Grant. Their daughter [Ann Smith, nee Grant] was James Smith's mother....John Grant, Town Clerk in Launceston was James Smith's uncle.⁸⁸

This story apparently passed muster with James Smith's own daughters, one of whom celebrated the Lumley connection in one of her children's names; another named her house Lumley.⁸⁹ In fact, Ann had no Launceston elders, and probably no Lumleys either in her Northumbrian past. Unlike his sister Mary, who opened a closed book in order to lay claim to a phantom inheritance, James Smith was probably rarely placed in a position which might expose his ex-convict parentage.

At Griffiths's house, James, the future 'saviour of Tasmania',⁹⁰ perhaps nearly assigned himself to a premature military burial, one of two known life-threatening experiences in his insecure childhood. James and Mary decided to try out the cannon on the lawn which was kept loaded and fired as a welcome to ships approaching Launceston, a novel form of salute by the ex-convict Griffiths, whose wealth, surely, portrayed him as a free-born immigrant to Van Diemen's Land. One child stood in front of the cannon as a human silencer. The other was trying to ignite the powder when they were discovered.⁹¹ Another dangerous greeting which came the way of young Smith was that alluded to already: at the age of about six years, he and four other boys, three of whom were Jonathan Griffiths's grandsons, were pondering the reluctance of some cattle to be driven home through a familiar gateway when a spear landed in the ground near one of the boys,

who was under nine years old [he] picked up the spear and after glancing at it said this is a blackfellows [sic] spear, we had better hide.

The boys were rushed into a nearby dry waterhole that was close by and hid themselves under some overhanging ferns I following their

⁸⁸ notes in Ronald Smith diary (25 November 1922 to 24 October 1923) written by Mary Jane Smith, NS234/16/17 (AOT). Intriguingly, a John Grant Smith is listed on the 1856 Launceston Assessment Roll.

⁸⁹ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson

⁹⁰ *Examiner* 3 November 1883

⁹¹ Ronald Smith letter dated 28 March 1963, NS234/9/9 (AOT)

example from thinking that they were older than I they knew what was best to be done on this occasion.

Presently however...I ascended from the hole and not seeing them I called one of them by name and hearing a sharp voice I looked in the direction of the ferns and there saw an aboriginal native who was uttering some words in what seemed to me to be a sort of broken English. The menacing tone of the native's voice and his appearance startled me into hurrying away from the place at my utmost speed and mistaking the way I soon arrived at a neighbour's place where I remained till a party arrived in search of me. As the native stood in the clump of ferns I could see from his head to his waist and noticed that he had on a dark coloured jacket or coat. In appearance he resembled the adult male native who about eight years afterwards was seen at the Surrey Hills and was afterward captured with his wife and children at Woolnorth.⁹²

Soon after this incident a favourite cat limped home with a throwing stick protruding from its side, which later led to further Smith speculation about Tasmanian Aborigines.⁹³

The boy's new family was short-lived. Ann Smith and Jonathan Griffiths were married in August 1834.⁹⁴ Perhaps, as Ann's description 'widow' on the marriage certificate suggests, John Smith's death had freed her to remarry; her 'widowhood', however, may have been a convenient fabrication, as was commonplace in early Tasmanian civil ceremonies. She may not have known whether the father of her children was dead or alive. Her new husband effectively dissolved their marriage on 29 January 1835, when a notice appeared in the *Launceston Advertiser* advising that he would not be answerable for her debts,

she having on Friday last [23 January 1835] eloped from my house without the slightest provocation.

⁹² Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT)

⁹³ See Chapter 4.

Whether 'eloped' means 'run off with a lover' is not clear. Griffiths's expression 'without the slightest provocation' implies desertion but also sounds defensive, as if an altercation of some kind preceded Ann's departure. It is possible that Ann left Griffiths's house to escape from the law, as in that same month of January 1835 an attempt was made to serve her a summons to answer a felony charge (which does not appear on her convict record). 'Felony' implies a serious, usually violent, offence - and Jonathan Griffiths may have been its recipient. There is a legend that Ann stabbed Jonathan,⁹⁵ another that he shot her in the arm because he thought she was favouring her offspring over his.⁹⁶ There is no evidence to support these stories, which are possibly projections from the known fact of the summons, but flight from the law would explain why Ann left without her three children.

It is also possible that an altercation took place when Ann discovered that Jonathan had a new lover. The constable who failed to serve the summons to Ann at Freshwater Point discovered that the Griffiths family, including Mrs Griffiths, had sailed for Sydney.⁹⁷ Clearly Ann had not: she was presumably elsewhere in Launceston by then. The 'Mrs Griffiths' aboard the vessel could have been Jonathan's next lover, or his son John Griffiths's wife. Jonathan appears to have replaced Ann with the daughter of a Launceston hotelier, who was possibly James Smith's new adopted mother.⁹⁸ That Griffiths renewed his disownment of Ann's debts in March 1836 suggests that, at that time at least, she remained in Launceston.⁹⁹

Mary certainly and John junior perhaps remained with Griffiths after their mother's 'elopement'; Mary was brought up as Griffiths's own daughter.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps James stayed with Griffiths at first, too; his whereabouts for eighteen months or so after his mother's 'elopement' are uncertain. There is no record of him having any further contact with

⁹⁴ Marriage no. 2589, 3 August 1834, Parish of St John, Launceston (AOT)

⁹⁵ personal communication with Susan Barter, Parkham, Tasmania

⁹⁶ A Geoffrey Horner, in Kerry Pink, *100 Years of Western Tasmanian Mining*, West Coast Pioneers' Museum, Zeehan, 1975, p.5

⁹⁷ CSO 1/787/16803 (AOT)

⁹⁸ This is suggested by Julius Rohr's letter to Mary Jane Smith 12 September 1907, NS234/5/6 (AOT).

⁹⁹ *Launceston Advertiser* 31 March 1836

¹⁰⁰ A report of Mary's marriage describes her as 'the youngest daughter of Captain Griffiths...' (*Hobart Town Courier* 10 January 1856).

'blood' family until he started his own 40 years later. His mother probably died in Hobart in 1852.¹⁰¹ His brother John, a Freemason,¹⁰² kept the seafaring spirit alive by becoming a ship's captain in the 1860s. From 1871 to 1878 John worked as a 'general dealer and ironmonger' in Brisbane, from which ill health forced him to retire prematurely.¹⁰³ He visited James in 1877, after an exchange of letters. In 1878 James wrote to his brother:

I scarcely think that after all you would feel surprised to know that our sister is still alive... I have had a letter from her. She told me that she is now a widow and speaking of her circumstances she says she has a 'nice home'...¹⁰⁴

Unfortunately, Mary's potentially enlightening letter to James is missing, but clearly the Smith children had lived most of their lives as strangers. It is not known which of them engineered this middle-aged reconciliation. Sadly, though letters were exchanged, James and Mary never met again. John and James lost contact in 1887, eight years after 'Captain' John Smith emigrated for the benefit of his health to California, where he grew oranges and almonds. In his last letter to James, John requested that he (James) not write again until he received further notice. The younger brother wrote:

What his motive was for making the request he did not state but as I understood that he had been in delicate health I thought it likely that he had found it necessary to seek further change of climate...¹⁰⁵

While they were communicating, John appears to have done James the honour of naming his next born son (born in 1879) after him, which he followed up by naming three daughters after his (James's).¹⁰⁶ This curious trans-Pacific familial bond and the tone of their letters suggests that both cherished their brief reunion. The commonness of the

¹⁰¹ Hobart Death Record no. 1350/1852 (AOT)

¹⁰² *Evening Standard* (California) 21 May 1902; personal communication with Shirley Stevenson

¹⁰³ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson

¹⁰⁴ Smith to John Smith 9 April 1878, NS234/2/4 (AOT)

¹⁰⁵ Smith to T J Crisp 14 September 1891, no. 370, NS234/2/15 (AOT)

¹⁰⁶ According to a Smith family tree held by Shirley Stevenson, James Smith had daughters Annie Bertha (born in 1877), Eva (born in 1878) and Gertrude (born in 1880). John Smith had daughters Annie Bertha (born in 1880), Minnie Gertrude (born in 1884) and Eva (born in 1893).

name John Smith would have made it difficult for James to track down his brother had he, as anticipated, changed his address. John Smith died at San Bernardino in 1902 without re-establishing contact with James.¹⁰⁷

Mary emigrated to England after marrying Glasgow-born Colour-Sergeant John Mark of the 99th Regiment in Launceston in 1856.¹⁰⁸ She later claimed that as a 'girl bride' (she was 27) she then set sail for the 'throes of mutiny and rebellion' in India, that is, the Sepoy Rebellion or Indian Mutiny of 1857/58.¹⁰⁹ She claimed to vividly recall the horrors of the Siege of Kanpur, and to have been presented with a 'medal of Honor and Virtue' by Queen Victoria 'for services rendered at the Indian mutiny', although she does not reveal what these services were. Mark, she claimed, had been decorated by the same monarch for his service in the 'war in New Zealand' in 1846.¹¹⁰

John Mark's military record confirms that all this, like her version of her lineage, was fabrication: she reinvented herself, perhaps, in the quest for a pension or a benefactor.¹¹¹ Mark had never served in India or New Zealand. It seems reasonable, however, to believe her story that she lectured on temperance and worked as a nurse and cook in England.¹¹² She returned to Australia as a sick widow (her husband died in 1875, leaving her less than £100¹¹³) and visited James Smith's family after his death, at which time she tried unsuccessfully to win her stepfather Jonathan Griffiths's reputed unclaimed estate, touted as an immensely valuable property at Potts Point, Sydney.¹¹⁴ In 1902 she was a member of the Independent Order of Good Templars, Grand Lodge of Victoria,¹¹⁵ in which state she died in 1912 in apparent loneliness and destitution,

¹⁰⁷ obituary, *The Sun* (California) 22 May 1902

¹⁰⁸ *Hobart Town Courier* 10 January 1856

¹⁰⁹ 'A Loyalist: Mrs John Burton Mark', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 10 February 1912, p.13

¹¹⁰ Mary Ann Mark to Mary Jane Smith 6 January 1898, no. 778, NS234/5/3 (AOT)

¹¹¹ John Mark's military record, WO97/1676, no. 1054, Public Records Office, Great Britain

¹¹² 'A Loyalist: Mrs John Burton Mark', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne) 10 February 1912, p.13

¹¹³ John Mark's will, WO97/1676, no. 1054, Public Records Office, Great Britain

¹¹⁴ See Mary Jane Smith correspondence NS234/5/5-7 (AOT) and a letter written by Ronald Smith 28 March 1963, NS234/9/9 (AOT). Mary Ann Mark appears to have had her facts wrong about ownership of the Potts Point property.

¹¹⁵ group photo in *Weekly Times* (Melbourne) 5 April 1902

having for years been supported by James Smith's widow.¹¹⁶ When her story was told earlier that year she was living in Little Collins Street, Melbourne. With the last vestiges of her pride accented by the 'women's interest' angle of the journalist, she cut a pathetic figure:

On entering the little sittingroom of this loyal patriot one might imagine herself in the 'den' of a veteran of the Crimea. All manner of relics and prints relative to the Peninsular War decorate the walls and ledges. Pictures of all the members of the Royal Family are also much in evidence. Here historic plaids take the place of cretonne covers, armchairs and couches are screened with shoulder plaids, bequeathed by heroes who have scaled the heights of Alma. There are also similar memorials from the Mutiny. One special plaid Mrs Mark proudly describes as hailing from the regiment 'Sir Colin Campbell's Own.'¹¹⁷

Her acquisition of heroics - Trafalgar, Waterloo, Kanpur and the Crimea - was impeccable. Peter Bolger describes how old emancipists tried to purge the stigma of convictism by being more 'normal', more patriotic and more conservative than free settlers, and by their immersion in friendly societies.¹¹⁸ It is likely that these children of ex-convicts underwent a similar purification, as suggested by Mary's reinvention of herself in particular. Independently of each other, it seems, they developed strong Christian principles and a commitment to temperance. Like James, John took a practical interest in the welfare of children¹¹⁹ and Mary was charitable - ironically, to the extent that James warned his brother against giving her money that she might give away.¹²⁰ Too little is known about Protestant Irish John Smith senior and Northumbrian Ann Grant to speculate whether British patriotism was one of the qualities they passed on to

¹¹⁶ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson; see also Mary Jane Smith correspondence NS234/5/5-7 (AOT)

¹¹⁷ 'A Loyalist: Mrs John Burton Mark', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne) 10 February 1912, p.13

¹¹⁸ Peter Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973, p.151

¹¹⁹ Smith to John Smith 23 December 1878, NS234/3/7 (AOT)

¹²⁰ Smith to John Smith 25 July 1882, no. 31, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

their children, let alone if it is true that, as J S Robertson wrote in his biography of David Livingstone,

every man who has earned distinction must have been blessed with a
parent or parents of no mean order, whatever their position in society.¹²¹

The exact circumstances of James Smith's potentially devastating split from mother, siblings and, perhaps, stepfather as well, are uncertain. The likely results, however, are well documented. Young children separated from their primary 'caregivers' typically look depressed, cry frequently, react slowly to stimuli, have poor concentration, may have sleep and appetite disturbances, even suicidal thoughts.¹²² Given Smith's adult personality, it seems likely that he became a very withdrawn child at this time. That he appears to have been guarded about his childhood (certainly his ex-convict parentage), even with his own family,¹²³ makes the following small revelation, in an 1881 letter from a neighbour, surprising. The original spelling and grammar have been retained:

Mr Smith some years agow ...you complained of your grand father husing
the lash but you exceed your grand father.¹²⁴

The neighbour's allegation was not that Smith had lashed his own children, but that his complaint about being lashed as a child was hypocritical given the injustice apparently meted out on the neighbour. Since Smith never met either of his grandfathers, this is probably a mistaken reference to his stepfather, Jonathan Griffiths. Smith never alludes to his relationship with Griffiths in his correspondence or notes, but does refer to his next 'father figure', John Guilan, as his 'guardian', not his stepfather.¹²⁵ Griffiths appears to have been a violent man. In 1833, aided and abetted by Jane Hooper and Catherine Anderson, he allegedly stabbed two bailiffs who had tried to serve him a

¹²¹ J S Robertson, *The Life of David Livingstone, L L D, the Great Missionary*, Murdoch and Co Ltd, London, 1882, p.11

¹²² Weller and Weller, 'Grief in Children and Adolescents', p.242

¹²³ Ronald Smith's letter dated 28 March 1963, NS234/9/9 (AOT), suggests that he, Smith's son, had no idea that John Smith and Ann Grant arrived in Tasmania as convicts.

¹²⁴ Robert McPhee to Smith 10 January 1881, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

¹²⁵ Smith notes NS234/14/3 (AOT)

writ.¹²⁶ This, on top of his legendary altercations with Ann Smith and the 'lashing' recollection, makes it very likely that Smith was physically abused as a child.

Jonathan Griffiths's departure for Port Fairy, Victoria, in May 1836 and James Smith's recollection that he became John Guilan's ward when he was nine years old¹²⁷ - which would make it July 1836 at the earliest - suggest that the first prompted the second. The reason for Griffiths's move is uncertain. He told the Lieutenant Governor that it was necessitated by the illegal assumption of his two farms on the Norfolk Plains (in the region of present-day Longford).¹²⁸ Given that Griffiths owned a great deal more property in the Tamar region, this reads like an exaggeration of his distress designed to curry favour. George Robinson hints that erratic or undesirable behaviour lay behind the move: that John Griffiths was 'an intentful man' placed at the Port Fairy farm to 'keep him from giving trouble'.¹²⁹ Perhaps Jonathan was violent and impossible to endure at the time Ann Smith left him; perhaps this even prompted her alleged 'felony'. It should be remembered, though, that since Jonathan Griffiths had been a merchant in seal skins and therefore possibly implicated in the kidnapping and abuse of Tasmanian Aboriginal women, the sanctimonious Robinson was always likely to judge him harshly.¹³⁰ George Dunderdale, though, who had been fed a Jonathan Griffiths cover story, alludes only to the practical advantages of his move to Port Fairy:

John Griffiths sent over his father, who had been a carpenter on board the first man-of-war that had arrived at Port Jackson, three old men who had been prisoners, four bullocks, a plough, and some seed potatoes....[they] planted four or five acres of potatoes....¹³¹

Jonathan Griffiths appears to have died at Port Fairy in 1839.¹³² Whatever his negative impact upon Smith, Griffiths had shown that convictism was not a barrier to

¹²⁶ *Launceston Advertiser* 21 March 1833

¹²⁷ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹²⁸ Jonathan Griffiths to Sir John Franklin 20 August 1839, CSO5/224/5706 (AOT)

¹²⁹ Robinson, George Augustus, *The Journals of George Augustus Robinson, Chief Protector, Port Phillip Aboriginal Protectorate* (ed. Ian D Clark), vol. 2, Heritage Matters, Melbourne, 1998, 27 April 1841, p.153

¹³⁰ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 28 May 1831, p.357

¹³¹ George Dunderdale, *The Book of the Bush*, Ward, Lock and Co, Melbourne, 1898, pp.42 and 45

¹³² Griffiths file (Devonport Maritime Museum)

achievement or social status, albeit that, like John Batman,¹³³ the son of a Sydney transportee, he may have arrived in Van Diemen's Land with a 'clean slate'.¹³⁴ This is suggested by his being assigned convict servants, which surely Governor Arthur would not have permitted had Griffiths a Van Diemen's Land convict record.¹³⁵ The collective silence about convictism would have doused suspicion of this kind. 'Convict,' according to historian Tom Griffiths,

became a forbidden word in polite conversation. Colonists, often seen to be quite careless of etiquette, observed it very carefully when it came to discussion of local origins. One did not ask about background or parentage.¹³⁶

Assuming that Griffiths was perceived as free-born, his marriage to Ann Smith, an ex-convict, should then have cancelled his entitlement to assignees anyway.¹³⁷ Having apprehended the colony's colourful bushranger, Matthew Brady, John Batman had then become the only native-born Australian to found an Australian capital city, Melbourne.¹³⁸ His fellow founder, John Fawkner, the London-born son of a transported convict, likewise displayed no want of purpose or enterprise.¹³⁹ In Melbourne there was even talk of raising a statue to this 'founding father'.¹⁴⁰ While Mary Reibey, 'convict turned capitalist', was perhaps an unlikely model for Smith, there were other examples of convict class made good that would parallel his own career.¹⁴¹ Emancipists John Michael Davies and James Gray would be elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly. Davies would found Hobart's *Mercury* newspaper; having inherited it, his

¹³³ See P C Brown, 'John Batman (1801-39)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.67-71.

¹³⁴ Batman's contemporary, James Bonwick, in his book *John Batman, the Founder of Victoria*, Wren, Melbourne, 1973 (originally published 1867), p.3, erased Batman's convict 'stain' by making his father a Pacific missionary.

¹³⁵ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, Harvill Press, London, 1988, p.389

¹³⁶ Tom Griffiths, 'Past Silences: Aborigines and Convicts in Our History-Making', in (eds. Penny Russell and Richard White) *Pastiche 1: Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Australia*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p.17

¹³⁷ Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, p.390

¹³⁸ C P Billot, *John Batman and the Founding of Melbourne*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1979, p.XII

¹³⁹ Billot, pp.60-1. See Hugh Anderson, 'John Pascoe Fawkner (1792-1869)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.368-71.

¹⁴⁰ Ken Inglis, *Australian Colonists: an Exploration of Social History 1788-1870*, Melbourne University Press, 1993 (first published 1974), p.315

sons Charles and John G Davies would, using Freemasonry as a ladder, likewise enter parliament, the last serving as James Smith's own absentee 'local' member. John G Davies would also serve as a chief magistrate and Hobart mayor before being knighted.¹⁴² The emancipist Charles Davis (not Charles *Davies*, mentioned above), having established himself as an ironmonger and merchant, would rise through Hobart society to be a charitable gentleman and Victorian patriarch, although that he found it necessary to destroy his convict record speaks for itself.¹⁴³ If emancipists such as Davis and John Michael Davies were never wholly accepted or wholly respected,¹⁴⁴ the collective silence made it easier for those one generation removed.

Smith's later ambitions and adult lifestyle perhaps reflect the influence of both Griffiths and John Guilan (pronounced 'Gullan'), the similarly industrious, but well-educated, Aberdeen-born¹⁴⁵ bachelor who succeeded Griffiths as Smith's guardian and 'father figure'. As a flour miller and fellow merchant, Guilan was probably acquainted with Griffiths,¹⁴⁶ but the common thoroughfare of the Tamar River had probably introduced him to the Smiths as well. At whose instigation Guilan took the boy is uncertain, but in any case James must have felt unwanted. Abandonment by his mother, and possibly by the stepmother who replaced her in Jonathan Griffiths's affections, perhaps burdened him for the rest of his life. She - or they - were apparently never discussed: no other woman influenced James's formative years after he left Griffiths.

Guilan had been recruited to Tasmania as a millwright and engineer. In partnership with his brother Alexander and John Symes (pronounced 'Sims'),¹⁴⁷ he traded across Bass Strait and with other northern Tasmanian ports, and also operated the Supply flour mill. He lived at the partners' warehouse on Canal Lane in Launceston's

¹⁴¹ Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, p.316

¹⁴² Bolger, *Hobart Town*, pp.155-7

¹⁴³ Alison Alexander, 'From Convict to Capitalist: the Career of Charles Davis', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 46, no. 1, March 1999, pp.37-56

¹⁴⁴ Bolger, *Hobart Town*, p.156

¹⁴⁵ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

¹⁴⁶ John Guilan did business with John Griffiths from at least the mid 1830s until the early 1840s, NS473/13 (AOT).

¹⁴⁷ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

dock area, where ships from the mill brought flour.¹⁴⁸ Here, at nine years of age, James Smith probably experienced a stable household for the first time, albeit a solely masculine one. In Guillan's care he was educated and trained. He probably attended school from 1836 to 1838, and certainly did in 1841, when he was 14.¹⁴⁹ By the onset of puberty the 'dutiful ward'¹⁵⁰ had joined a larger masculine community: he was sent to work as an apprentice at the mill on the western Tamar, almost opposite his old home of Swan Bay. Flour milling would occupy the rest of Smith's formative years, teaching him responsibility and discipline, but it was also the catalyst for a more important development, perhaps even a reaction to the work: he found freedom in the bush.

Even today the Supply millsite seems isolated. As steam engines were unobtainable in the early days of the colony, the first flour mills were wind-driven, but water power soon became the standard.¹⁵¹ The search for a strong supply of water sometimes led to out-of-the-way locations which guaranteed them a colourful history. The Supply mill, built in 1825 as the third of its kind in the northern part of the colony, stood where a small stream called the Supply River flows through rocks into a saltwater inlet of the Tamar, forming a sheltered backwater navigable by small ships not far from the Tamar Heads.¹⁵²

Life in the bush and on its verges would invest Smith with a rich knowledge of northern Tasmanian folklore. About eight kilometres from the mill stood an Aboriginal 'spire', an elaborately carved and decorated tree which was believed to have been a sacred site and probably a focus of tribal activity.¹⁵³ Smith would have heard that Aborigines had twice attacked the Supply mill, and that in 1830 its then owner, Gildas,

¹⁴⁸ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson

¹⁴⁹ T W Monds, *Autobiography of Thomas Wilkes Monds*, A J Pasmore, Launceston, 1907, p.17

¹⁵⁰ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹⁵¹ See K M Dallas, 'Water Power in Tasmanian History', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 8, 1960, pp.85-93; and Jill Cassidy, 'Flour Milling Trades: a Case Study', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 45, no. 2, June 1998, pp.104-7.

¹⁵² *Colonial Times* 16 December 1825, p.3; 'B', 'Our Early Mills and Millers', *Examiner* 17 July 1886; Branagan, *George Town*, p.23. The Supply River was so named by the French explorer Louis de Freycinet because it provided a supply of fresh water.

¹⁵³ letter written by W B Walker 24 December 1827; cited by James Erskine Calder, *Wars, Extirpation, Habits, etc of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*, Henn and Co, Hobart, 1875, p.37



The Supply mill. (Top) An early twentieth-century shot of the abandoned mill. A large waterwheel attached to the wall facing the river used water power (when the water level was higher) to drive the machinery. (Bottom) The mill today.

along with two servants, had been speared to death at Stoney Creek (now Stoney Brook).¹⁵⁴ Young Smith's fellow workers also told him about another murder on the premises. When the bushrangers Edward Brown and George Jefkins visited,

the miller [Bartley Smith, otherwise known as William Bartlett], who was in a state of partial intoxication, treated them more as if they were friends in distress than as men intent on plunder....Presently the miller in a still maudlin condition and amidst demonstrations of seeming friendliness, moved nearer and nearer to one of the bushrangers, till at last throwing his arm round the latter he said, 'I'll take you.'...in an instant the grappled bushranger snatched a pistol from his belt, and discharged its contents at his supposed treacherous assailant. The unfortunate miller fell dead. A bullet had passed through his body, and lodged in the knee of a man who was seated at a short distance.¹⁵⁵

Launceston baker, miner and speculator William Boswell (W B) Dean, with whom the apprentice flour miller became acquainted in 1840,¹⁵⁶ spun a grislier tale. Perhaps in deference to John Symes's later reputation for producing bacon, Dean had the police arriving to find two victims, one of whose bodies was being fought over by ten or twelve feeding pigs.¹⁵⁷ Brown and Jefkins were later notoriously associated with the bushranger Samuel Britton, whose progress and mysterious fate appear to have fascinated Smith. Local sympathy for Britton, Smith recalled, derived from the belief that he had been harshly treated as a convict. One George Town family in particular befriended the outlaw, and at great personal risk sometimes supplied him with food:

A girl, a member of the family, used, while on her way to obtain water at a convenient spot, to deposit from her water can from time to time quantities of food in such a way that the bushrangers could with little risk of capture obtain the supplies thus furnished. Once however while

¹⁵⁴ Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp.65, 78 and 94. Gildas had earlier survived kidnapping by Matthew Brady's gang.

¹⁵⁵ (James Smith), 'An Episode of Early Days', *Examiner* 20 September 1886. See also *Launceston Advertiser* 12 October 1829.

¹⁵⁶ W B Dean to E Henty 19 April 1873, no. 141, NS234/3/1 (AOT). Dean bought flour from John Guilan.

conveying a breakfast for them she saw a party of constables approaching and thinking that if she continued to pursue her intended course the aroma of eggs and bacon might betray her she turned aside and calling around her a number of pigs that knew her voice she shot out amongst them the contents of the can which was of course speedily eaten up.¹⁵⁸

When a party clearing the coastal road between the Leven settlement (later Ulverstone) and Penguin in 1869 found a man's skeleton, Smith speculated that this might have been Britton, who was last sighted - badly injured - east of Port Sorell before his gang's fatal shoot-out in 1835. The bushranger might have been making his way to Emu Bay, Smith suggested, where friends made as an assignee to the Van Diemen's Land Company would have sheltered him, when he died.¹⁵⁹ In the absence of a body, Britton sightings, like those of the executed royal house of Russia in the next century, had proliferated for years, one being reported in England.¹⁶⁰ Even during Smith's time at the Supply mill, strangers were treated with suspicion. Matthew Brady¹⁶¹ and Samuel Britton¹⁶² had both once posed as constables (in pursuit of their real selves) in order to take their victims by surprise. Smith recalled a man approaching the 'isolated dwelling' in about 1839

with a musket in his hand. In his dress and otherwise he was as much like a bushranger as perhaps can be imagined. He said that he was a constable travelling under orders and after requesting and obtaining permission to stay for the night he said that he had seen a bushranger in a boat in a bay of the river in the immediate vicinity. The bushranger

¹⁵⁷ 'B', 'Our Early Mills and Millers', *Examiner* 17 July 1886

¹⁵⁸ Smith, 'Britton', notes NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹⁵⁹ (James Smith), 'An Episode of Early Days', *Examiner* 20 September 1886. For more about Britton see Smith's anonymous 'An Episode of the Early Days of Tasmania', *Examiner* 2 May 1887 and 15 August 1887.

¹⁶⁰ See 'An Episode of the Early Days of Tasmania', *Examiner* 2 May 1887 and 15 August 1887; and R F Minchin, *Bolters for the Bush: Bushranging in Old Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart, 1996, pp.26-8.

¹⁶¹ James Erskine Calder, 'Tasmanian History: the First Troubles of Governor Arthur - a Sketch of Old Times; Embodying the Bush Career of Matthew Brady', *Mercury* 18 August 1873

¹⁶² 'Daring Outrage', *Launceston Advertiser* 19 December 1833

had he said, on seeing him jumped out of the boat pushed her as fast as he could for some distance from the shore then returned into her and rowed away as fast as he could. And the visitor said that he would pursue and capture the bushranger if men of the establishment would assist him in doing so....¹⁶³

As he had nothing to support his word...and as a bushranger might come with a similar statement and request people of the place to accompany him with a view to weakening the defense [sic]...there could be no idea of any of the men joining him in pursuit of the man in the boat even if any of them had been inclined to do so....

That evening the foreman of the establishment who had previously been taken unawares and robbed by bushrangers confided to me that having arrived at the conclusion that the visitor was a bushranger in disguise he had loaded his gun with ball and intended to keep watch...¹⁶⁴

The visitor was actually a constable. A factor which had counted against his authenticity was that, unlike other policemen, he had failed to bring tidings from the latest weekly journal to this outpost of civilisation - he had not fulfilled his secondary function of messenger.¹⁶⁵

It is intriguing to wonder whether Smith's interest in local bushrangers was sparked by his father's brief confederacy with Michael Howe, and if any of the recollections Smith attributes to ex-prisoners actually passed his father's lips. One of his anonymous informants, for instance, was a convict who had laboured in the early days at George Town, as Smith's father had possibly done. Smith's infantile brain (he would have been only four or five years old at his father's exit) was probably capable of grasping this description of how lime used in mortar was obtained from the sea:

My informant said he was one of a party that was engaged in obtaining the shells with sieves and that no matter how cold the weather he and

¹⁶³ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

¹⁶⁴ Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT)

his fellow prisoners were compelled to wade into the water and perform the work. He spoke with horror of his sufferings when engaged at the work during the cold months of winter.¹⁶⁶

Smith's informant or informants explained how convicts stowed away on ships leaving George Town.¹⁶⁷ It is easy to imagine a boy who had been subjected to corporal punishment, as Smith appears to have been, wincing in vicarious pain at another tale he was told of the flagellator Doherty or Docherty:

He was the only flagellator of whom I heard the prisoners speak as at all merciful. It was said that although 'Docerty' seemed to flog with all his might yet he inflicted much less pain than any other flagellator. How he could satisfy the eagerness of the officers for severity and yet favor the victims was a mystery till he imparted his secret to someone who repeated it in my hearing after his death. The secret...was the extension of the fore finger along the handle of the 'cat'. With the handle held in this way it was said the blows would fall comparatively light even though the flagellator tried to 'do' his 'duty' to the utmost.¹⁶⁸

Smith's fascination with bushrangers, and especially the life and fate of Samuel Britton, is ironic, considering that Michael Howe, Matthew Brady, Martin Cash¹⁶⁹ and, to a lesser extent, Britton, preceded him as popular heroes in Tasmania - a popularity unsanctioned by the authorities except in the form of nomenclature. They made a lasting impression. An 1848 visitor to Van Diemen's Land found that, 30 years after his death, Howe

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*

¹⁶⁷ Smith notes NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹⁶⁸ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT). Two accounts of the execution of Matthew Brady have a man named Dogherty as the Hobart executioner (see 'B', 'Brady and His Associates', *Examiner* 31 March 1888; and Richard Butler's Brady romance, *And Wretches Hang*, Corgi, Melbourne, 1977, p.10).

¹⁶⁹ See L L Robson and Russel Ward, 'Martin Cash (1808-77)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (A D B), vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.214-5.

was without dispute, and without disparagement to other public characters who, on more reputable grounds may deserve a memoir, the historical great man of this island.¹⁷⁰

Numerous Bradys Lookouts, Dunnes, Howes and Cashes dotting the landscape resonate the romance that still has a hold in Tasmania, in the form of bushranger legends, fiction and the proclamation of any cave discovered on the Great Western Tiers as a bushranger bolt-hole.¹⁷¹ Although Lieutenant-Governor Arthur had managed to repress local bushranger ballads of the type that had proliferated in the mainland colonies,¹⁷² he could not stifle the groundswell of sympathy. Such bandits could only have survived at large as long as they did with the collaboration of free settlers, ex-convicts and assigned servants. The Van Diemen's Land bushranger

was, in general, looked upon as a sort of martyr to convictism. It was he who experienced the shame, the lash, the brutal taunt, from which they had suffered. It was he who rose against the tyranny of their prison despot...His reckless daring would be the noblest chivalry...¹⁷³

For some the bushranger was an agent of social justice:

Convicts, emancipists, native-born, and immigrant workers alike shared the conviction that, morally, Australia was their country, and resented that so much of it should be given by the government to rich newcomers. This resentment was to find its clearest expression in the elevation of the bushranger to the role of folk hero.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel G C Munday; cited by Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, p.307

¹⁷¹ For a sample of such literature, see, for instance, James Bonwick, *The Bushrangers: Illustrating the Early Days of Van Diemen's Land*, Fullers Bookshop, Hobart, 1967 (originally published 1856); Chris Loring, *Compelled to Tiers*, self-published and undated; and Richard Butler, *And Wretches Hang*. For a more scholarly treatment see, for example, W and J E Heiner, 'Martin Cash: the Legend and the Man', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 14, no. 2, June 1967, pp.65-85. For a concise history of Martin Cash's activities, see Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, pp.415-6; for a detailed treatment see Frank Clune, *Martin Cash: the Last of the Tasmanian Bushrangers*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1955.

¹⁷² Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, pp.231 and 234-5

¹⁷³ Bonwick, *The Bushrangers*, p.89

¹⁷⁴ Eleanor Hodges, 'The Bush Legend', in (ed. John Carroll), *Intruders in the Bush: the Australian Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2nd edn., 1992, p.6

They were the colony's self-proclaimed Robin Hoods and Dick Turpins. Like Howe, Brady, Cash and Britton, Smith also had been scarred by convictism, although he bore no welts of the lash (at least, not from a flagellator): perhaps he felt a common bond. While Britton lacked the daring and gallantry of Brady and Cash, unlike them he had lived in Smith's childhood - in whispers of fear or sympathy, if not in physical presence. Perhaps as poor ex-convicts the Smiths could afford to admire Britton, confident that he would not target them; perhaps, given the Michael Howe escape fiasco, John Smith aided and abetted this Robin Hood and his merry men. It is possible that Smith's life-long interest in bushrangers stemmed from infantile identification with his father, who may have romanticised the likes of Howe and Britton and their rebellious lifestyle, one which was sharply at odds with the adult Smith's moral system. Both John Smith and Samuel Britton disappeared in mysterious circumstances. Perhaps James wanted to believe that his father died by the gun, as Britton probably did, this being the only demise worthy of the 'outlaw' he idolised.

The Supply River ensured the mill had motive power for at least eight months of the year. Working around the clock, the three-storey mill, which housed two pairs of 4'6" millstones plus dressing and wheat-cleansing machinery, could turn out about 40 tons of flour per week.¹⁷⁵ Smith lived with as many as five men in the weatherboard cottage attached to the mill. Nearby stood the miller's cottage and a two-acre garden containing fruit trees. These must have been the confines of his working life for several years. While he left no account of his duties at the Supply, the apprentice who took his place while he was at school recalled managing the hoppers on the top floor, beginning the day by shovelling meal into the hopper of the dressing machine. The dirtiest job was mixing lime with the smutty wheat in order to eradicate dust. The apprentice received no wages, only food, clothing and the occasional half crown. After work, light permitting, he set the dogs after 'kangaroo', often bringing home steaks which were fried with bacon or made into a kangaroo 'steamer', being chopped fine and stewed with fat pork and

¹⁷⁵ advertisement in *Cornwall Chronicle* February 1848; cited on 'A Cartledge Family History' website, www.sydney.net/~kiss/family1.html

onions. The mill's river environment encouraged expertise in boating and rowing.¹⁷⁶ Smith's notes confirm that in his youth he was a skilled yachtsman. Explaining the tactics that had lost a yachting race, he recalled:

I was on one occasion convinced that a fault had been committed in this way, the losing boat having been kept as close to the wind as possible without her sails being allowed to shake, that I undertook to sail that losing boat against her successful rival under precisely the same conditions of wind, tide sails [sic] and ballast. The result was a very decisive victory on my part and for that reason that I accelerated the speed of the boat by keeping the head of the boat a little more from the wind in beating than it had been kept when she lost the race.¹⁷⁷

The junior apprentice's description tallies with Smith's of labour which left time for hunting, fishing and even searching for minerals. The Tamar had already been quarried for limestone and iron ore; large scale iron ore and gold production would follow in the 1870s.¹⁷⁸ Its rocky verges, with their rich folklore about bushrangers and Aborigines, must have been fascinating to explore, and presumably the lack of company of his own age in the late 1830s encouraged this solitary pursuit. Smith was a shy man, and the troubles of his early years probably ensured that he was a retiring child. The question of whether for him at this time the bush represented a retreat from people, and the stresses associated with them, invokes a complex, recurring theme in Tasmanian history.

For the Aborigines during the 'Black War' the bush was a literal escape: their superior bushmanship permitted them to emerge from it and mount guerrilla attacks upon the white invaders, knowing that they could lose avenging pursuers.¹⁷⁹ Although absconders from the Macquarie Harbour penal settlement, at least, would later find the

¹⁷⁶ Monds, *Autobiography*, pp.18-9

¹⁷⁷ Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT)

¹⁷⁸ Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple*, pp.6, 9 and 139; Coultman Smith, *Town With a History: Beaconsfield, Tasmania*, Beaconsfield Museum Committee, 1978, p.8 and following. Also, see generally Janet Kerrison, *Beaconsfield and its Mine*, B A (Hons) thesis, University of Tasmania, 1962.

¹⁷⁹ Henry Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People: a Radical Re-examination of the Tasmanian Wars*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1995, pp.34-36

wilderness to which they were not adapted an enemy, by 1807, according to Boyce, escaped convicts were already surviving all year round in the bush.¹⁸⁰ Boyce depicts the 'Vandemonian' phase of European settlement as both an escape from convictism and an embrace of a new, egalitarian social order:

In less than two decades, the Van Diemen's Land bush had been transformed for most from a prison to a home, becoming the source of a new level of liberty, social freedom, and economic independence that was truly extraordinary in a penal colony.¹⁸¹

Tasmania itself has been seen as an escape for some. Three of Tasmania's conservationist icons have been portrayed at some time as refugees from tyranny or alienation. Gustav Weindorfer, according to Barrett, escaped the militarism of Germany and Austria (in reality, he came to Tasmania because it was his fiancée's homeland).¹⁸² Lithuanian-born Olegas Truchanas had been a Resistance fighter in World War II, who migrated to escape Soviet rule when it was imposed on his country in 1945;¹⁸³ and Bob Brown, in Peter Thompson's early biography, as a young man in New South Wales was a 'square peg' searching for meaning but finding little but loneliness and hypocrisy,¹⁸⁴ to the extent that he had considered suicide.¹⁸⁵ In Tasmania each of these men found and championed the 'wilderness', an unspoiled place from which, Thoreau-like,¹⁸⁶ they drew strength.

The ultimate expression of the bush as an escape in Australian literature is in the protagonist of Patrick White's novel *Voss*, a character modelled to some extent on the explorer Ludwig Leichardt. Voss's exploration of outback Australia is an escape from human intimacy, a retirement 'into a private "world of desert and dreams" the better to

¹⁸⁰ Boyce, 'Journeying Home', p.45

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*, p.44

¹⁸² Charles Barrett, *Isle of Mountains*, Cassell and Company, London, 1944, p.5. See also Raymond F Tilley, 'Gustav Weindorfer (1874-1932)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)*, vol. 12, Melbourne University Press, 1990, pp.208-9.

¹⁸³ Max Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas*, Olegas Truchanas Publication Committee, Hobart, 1975, p.16

¹⁸⁴ Peter Thompson, *Bob Brown of the Franklin River*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp.10, 12 and 25

¹⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p.13

¹⁸⁶ See Henry David Thoreau, *The Portable Thoreau* (ed. Carl Bode), Penguin, New York, 1987.

relish "the illusion of his own strength."¹⁸⁷ Crucially, Voss is 'propelled as much by his recoil from human need as by an ambition to realize his genius in the wilderness.'¹⁸⁸

Parallels with the character of Voss can be found in the 'missionaries' George Robinson (in Tasmania) and David Livingstone (in Africa), both of whom have been accused of manipulating their indigenous charges to suit personal ambition, while being incapable of anything more than superficial relationships with fellow white Europeans.¹⁸⁹ In addition, Vivienne Rae-Ellis claims that Robinson, one of Tasmania's most powerful John the Baptist or Christ-like ascetic figures, fled England 'in a desperate bid to save his own skin.'¹⁹⁰ Similarly, the self-proclaimed British explorer Winwood Reade escaped from most of his failures and critics by trying to martyr himself in Africa:

Reade's journeys were as much as an escape as a quest: a flight not just from the bonds of family, but also from the world of civilization and commerce in which he so often cast himself as a victim - the wayward heir, the novelist, brusied by his critics, the free-thinker rebelling against the orthodoxies of his time.¹⁹¹

Tasmanian bushman tipplers such as Paddy Hartnett, Syd Reardon and Teddy O'Rourke found in the bush a refuge from alcoholism and a scant income.¹⁹² Hartnett, like many prospectors, could not lead a dignified life in town. According to his daughter, Nell Williams, proximity to the pub foiled an effort to employ him in a Launceston office.¹⁹³ Similarly, Cradle and Lake St Clair hunter and highland tourist guide Bert Nichols is believed to have taken to the bush after being shell-shocked at the Great War.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁷ Peter Knox-Shaw, *The Explorer in English Fiction*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1987, pp.170-1

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p.171

¹⁸⁹ Vivienne Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson, Protector of Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1988, pp.9 and 190; Judith Listowel, *The Other Livingstone*, Julian Friedman, Lewes, United Kingdom, 1974, pp.244-5

¹⁹⁰ Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p.9

¹⁹¹ Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, p.93

¹⁹² Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, pp.97-101

¹⁹³ interview with Nell Williams 16 June 1995

¹⁹⁴ interview with John Nichols 1999

Richard Flanagan links the Gordon River piners to Irish convicts, and claims that the south-western rivers were for them 'a symbol of freedom'. He explains that

the world they had created for themselves in the river country was one that remained outside, and largely untouched by, the various authorities that have come to permeate present society.¹⁹⁵

The present author once asked long-serving Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park ranger and former hunter Es Connell what he enjoyed about working in the bush, expecting him to wax lyrical about the mountains, lakes and waterfalls or perhaps even the smells of the bush. 'It was the best time of your life,' was the reply, 'being away on your own, no worries, no motor cars, no people.'¹⁹⁶ While these words echo the sentiments of other bushmen, it would be wrong to suggest that in such cases the *negative* drive of escape from people, the urban 'rat-race' or, in some cases, the pub, was stronger than the *positive* drive, that is, the attraction that the bush and the bushlife held for such people. Nell Williams, for example, recalls that

I always felt sad when Dad [Hartnett] went away and left us because he'd be gone for three months at a time. He was never lonely because he loved the bush. He had his birds and things to talk to and he didn't have to have people.¹⁹⁷

Flanagan writes of the early twentieth-century Gordon River bushmen (including track-cutters, surveyor's assistants and prospectors) that

it would be wrong to presume that these men were prepared to rough it in the wilderness simply to earn a living. Far easier and more financially rewarding work was to be had elsewhere. More than money lured these men back; they returned because they found a living in the wilderness intrinsically worthwhile,

¹⁹⁵ Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River County*, Greenhouse, Richmond, Victoria, 1985, p.74

¹⁹⁶ interview with Es Connell 27 June 1998

¹⁹⁷ interview with Nell Williams 16 June 1995

a value that formed part of the legacy handed onto the piners.¹⁹⁸ Olegas Truchanas, according to Max Angus, was

delighted...to think of the undiscovered places he might visit. Every inch of Europe, he said, must have been trodden by some man at some time. In the South-West [of Tasmania], he thought, he could perhaps find lakes, tarns, or a river that he would be the first to see.¹⁹⁹

Smith and Truchanas appear to have shared a yearning for adventure and discovery. As discussed in Chapter 4, aside from its geological promise, the fauna, flora, landscape and folklore of the bush fascinated Smith, moving him to poetry and even spiritual metaphors. During his wanderings along the Tamar, which he later recalled as preparation for his prospecting expeditions, he developed a sureness of foot and physical strength, while narrow escapes from fire and drowning taught him caution when exploring alone.²⁰⁰

The men who formed Smith's society at this time were 'respectable' if perhaps not God-fearing, failing to observe the Sabbath or abstention.²⁰¹ The mill manager, John Symes, was an 18-stone (115-kilo) Englishman given to bursts of 'I Am a Jolly Soldier'. A stout Scotsman named Robert Muir coupled expertise as head miller with the intricate hobby of taxidermy, having assembled a menagerie of stuffed Tasmanian birds which, perhaps, stimulated Smith's interest in fauna. Symes, Muir and their three millhands enjoyed a drinking spree. Such was the case when in 1841 Smith was sent to Patterson's school in Launceston, an institution well-known for its writing skills. His twelve-year-old replacement at the mill, Thomas Monds,²⁰² perhaps exercised as great an influence upon his development and his future as anyone thus far. Monds would be Smith's lifelong friend. He probably introduced Smith to Congregationalism, which provided much of his spiritual and moral framework, and certainly introduced him to the

¹⁹⁸ Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty*, p.61

¹⁹⁹ Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas*, p.18

²⁰⁰ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁰¹ Monds, *Autobiography*, p.18

²⁰² See Mary K Whishaw, 'Thomas Monds (1829-1916)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.245-6.

settlement at the Forth River, his eventual home on a trip the pair made in 1849.²⁰³ Later, as Smith's Launceston agent, Monds would help him establish his farm. Monds recalled being turned to abstinence by the binges he witnessed at the Supply mill; perhaps Smith's teetotalism was likewise initiated.²⁰⁴

Their benefactor John Guilan was once described as 'as practical and clever a workman at his business as has ever been in the colony',²⁰⁵ but a businessman he was not. At a time when South Australia relied on Van Diemen's Land for farm produce, the Guillans and Symes traded flour and wheat on their 120-ton schooner the *Dusty Miller*. In November 1842 lighters from the Supply mill loaded £8,400-worth of flour aboard the vessel in Swan Bay, and it sailed for Adelaide - uninsured. The *Dusty Miller* was wrecked - ironically off Griffiths Island, Port Fairy, Victoria, named after Smith's former stepbrother John Griffiths - bankrupting John Guilan, claims against him of £4,714 being proven in the Insolvent Court.²⁰⁶ The mill was sold. The last Monds heard of Symes was that, despite losing a leg in an accident, he made ends meet by selling fruit on the streets of Melbourne.²⁰⁷

Guilan's insolvency appears to have been a milestone in Smith's youth. First of all, it led to his first appointment as a manager, at the steam-driven Bridge mill, Guilan's new, leased premises, suggesting that at eighteen he was unusually responsible for his age and knew his trade well. This event, however, also marked an increasing restlessness in Smith. Although Smith's daughter Annie claimed her father's years in Launceston were 'peaceful and happy',²⁰⁸ Monds recalled his 'fiery temper' and 'roving disposition' at this time. In what could be seen as adolescent rebellion, a tilt at independence, Smith stormed out of his master's home and employ after having his ears boxed for a trivial offence by Alexander Guilan. He spent the following year, 1848, working with shipbuilder Thomas Wiseman, creator of the *Dusty Miller*.

²⁰³ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁰⁴ Monds, *Autobiography*, p.18

²⁰⁵ 'B', 'Our Early Mills and Millers', *Examiner* 17 July 1886

²⁰⁶ *Cornwall Chronicle* 12 August 1843. For details of the *Dusty Miller*'s final voyage and wreck see Shirley Strachan, *The Port Fairy Shipwreck Resource (1836-1878): History, Archaeology and Management: Case for Area Declaration*, Victorian Ministry for Planning and Environment, Melbourne, 1987.

²⁰⁷ Monds, *Autobiography*, p.21

Smith's children Annie Bertha and Ronald wrote that while still an apprentice he undertook a course of self-education.²⁰⁹ This perhaps begins to explain why Smith was much more literate than his siblings, whose letters to him in later life are barely comprehensible. Their formal education was presumably brief, but so was James's. Unfortunately no comparison is possible of the circumstances of their lives after their mother's exit, which might have informed speculation as to their relative drives and ambitions, but it can safely be said that James was the most ambitious of the three. Mary's goals were presumably proscribed by her gender, if not by her social status. Smith probably had a greater natural curiosity and greater passion for knowledge than his older brother. In later years, when asked to share his knowledge of Tasmanian building timbers, Smith showed that these factors had been at work at Wiseman's:

I once had some experience in connection with Tasmanian hard wood at the establishment of a shipbuilder who after several years experience in working hard woods of this colony gave it as his opinion that if Tasmanian hard wood were to be properly selected and felled when the sap is down and seasoned in sheds instead of being cracked and warped by exposure to the weather it would be found to be all that could be reasonably desired with respect to strength and durability. For planking and spars he used white-top stringy-bark. The spars were soaked in saltwater more or less prior to being used.

As was usually the case with the mature Smith, he had supplemented the opinion of an expert with personal experience and observation:

I consider the white-top stringy-bark superior and in respect to spars for vessels very superior to the brown stringy-bark. For splitting purposes well selected white-top stringy-bark is not to be surpassed...

I have never seen a forest of white-top stringy-bark close to the seaboard or very near the margin of a tidal river. The finest forest of this

²⁰⁸ A B Crowther, *James Smith*, A3160 (Mitchell Library), p.4

²⁰⁹ George Scott (A B Crowther, nee Smith), 'The Discoverer of Mount Bischoff', *The Lone Hand* 2 December 1907, p.201; Ronald Smith, 'Philosopher Smith': How He Discovered Mount Bischoff, *Mercury* 31 March 1925

kind of timber I have seen commences at the Hanging Rock [Loyetea Peak, near Gunns Plains] about ten miles south of Penguin and extends southward and westward over a large area.²¹⁰

Monds's autobiography widens the picture of Smith's state of mind at this time. While Smith learned the shipbuilding trade, the 35-year-old Alexander Guilan fell and drowned in Bass Strait when the tiller broke on the ironically-named nemesis he was piloting, the *Alexander*.²¹¹ When Smith returned to the Guilan household after his assailant's death, he found that his absence had allowed Monds to leapfrog him in the milling business.²¹² The senior apprentice was relegated to assistant at Guilan's new Albion mill on the North Esk River. According to Monds, Smith did not dispute that this was the proper hierarchy: while the younger boy groomed himself for a career as a miller, Smith was 'at best conscientious. His mind was elsewhere.' Clearly milling did not invoke his curiosity; nor, apparently, was shipbuilding his future. Smith was 'something of a visionary', Monds wrote, perhaps with vision a little tinted by hindsight, 'and always seemed to be absorbed in something else besides the making of flour...'²¹³ What did he seek?

The young adult: 'self-culture' and moral framework

Evolutionary oracles guard the geological wonders of western Tasmania. By milking the south-westerlies, they sustain the rainforests which choked the path of the west's most celebrated inhabitants, prison escapees and mineral discoverers, in the river valleys below. The peaks of the West Coast Range honour Charles Darwin,²¹⁴ Thomas Henry

²¹⁰ Smith notes NS234/14/2 (AOT)

²¹¹ John Clark to Smith 25 July 1851, NS234/3/1 (AOT). See also Smith's notes about Guilan and Symes's ship written in response to an article about Port Sorell shipbuilding written by 'B' (W B Dean) in NS234/14/3 (AOT).

²¹² Monds, *Autobiography*, p.28

²¹³ *ibid*

²¹⁴ (1809-82) English naturalist whose theory of evolution and natural selection ('Darwinism'), first expressed in *Origin of Species* (1859), revolutionised western philosophy and science

Huxley,²¹⁵ James Beete Jukes,²¹⁶ Sir Richard Owen,²¹⁷ Charles Lyell,²¹⁸ Adam Sedgwick,²¹⁹ John Tyndall,²²⁰ Sir Archibald Geike²²¹ and Sir Roderick Murchison.²²² The range's southern bookend, Mount Sorell, which recalls Van Diemen's Land's Lieutenant Governor William Sorell,²²³ alone nods to the darker past. As a mass of white quartz and pink conglomerate, the architect of the Macquarie Harbour penal settlement²²⁴ oversaw the redemption of his shackled charges, the imagining of which is the quest of tourists today as the rain scuds and whitecaps whip around their hydrofoil on the harbour.

Western Tasmania's transformation from a land of unspeakable horrors and shame to the heartland of Tasmanian prosperity, containing most of Mount Bischoff's great successors, is no more dramatic than a typical west coast weather change. When blue skies break over the range, the sun equips its peaks with a benevolence that not even Mount Owen's scorched head, defoliated long ago by smelting fumes, can dim. Ironically, most of the West Coast Range, including Mounts Murchison and Sedgwick, was named in 1862 by their geological protégé Charles Gould,²²⁵ who failed to unearth the treasures at its feet while searching there for gold.²²⁶

Gould, seven years Smith's junior, had embraced the most influential science of the time. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the leading geological theorists were both deists (as opposed to Christian theologians), believing in 'a wise and

²¹⁵ (1825-95) English biologist and principal supporter of Darwinism in England

²¹⁶ (1811-69) English geologist who made important observations about Australian geology while visiting as naturalist on the sloop *Fly* in 1842

²¹⁷ (1804-92) English zoologist and comparative anatomist

²¹⁸ (1797-1875) English geologist and author of *Principles of Geology* (1830-3)

²¹⁹ (1785-1873) professor of geology at Cambridge University from 1818 onwards

²²⁰ (1820-93) Irish-born physicist whose main fields of research were in light, sound and radiant heat

²²¹ (1835-1924) Scottish geologist, professor of geology at University of Edinburgh 1871-82

²²² (1792-1871) English gentleman geologist who, after visiting the Ural goldfield in Russia, likened its geological formation to those of eastern Australia

²²³ See John Reynolds, 'William Sorell (1775-1848)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (A D B), vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.459-62.

²²⁴ Townsley, *Tasmania from Colony to Statehood*, p.7

²²⁵ Charles Gould, geological surveyor, was contracted on the recommendation of Sir Roderick Murchison. See Maxwell R Banks and M L Yaxley, 'Charles Gould (1834-1893)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (A D B), vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.277-8. The search for gold overtook Gould's appointed purpose, which was to conduct a geological survey of the colony, produce a geological map and a book about its mineral deposits and geology.

²²⁶ See Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p.7; Binks, *Explorers*, pp.179-85.

beneficent deity who had specially designed the earth and its inhabitants for the well-being of mankind', rather than the Biblical God.²²⁷ Mapping of strata by the likes of William Smith and Georges Cuvier led to attempts to use them to recount the earth's geological history.²²⁸ By the end of the 1830s most of the chronological sequence of subdivisions had been established, chiefly by British geologists. Prominent amongst them were Sir Roderick Murchison and Adam Sedgwick, who together devised the Devonian system, relying upon palaeontological evidence, that is, identifying the age of strata by fossil type.²²⁹

Geologically speaking, however, it is fitting that pride of place on the West Coast Range - in the form of Tasmania's greatest mineral treasure - should be reserved for Charles Lyell, as he was Charles Darwin's geological mentor during the development of the latter's theory of 'natural selection'.²³⁰ Developing the ideas of Scotsman James Hutton, Lyell had rejected Cuvier's catastrophical geological change theory (with which some anxious theologians had gladly reconciled the Biblical flood) in favour of slow and steady change caused by constant, on-going forces.²³¹

The 'trig point' crowning Mount Bischoff when James Smith struck tin is a useful metaphor for the advance of geological knowledge and awareness. Before Smith's discovery, the mountain had been skirted by the Van Diemen's Land Company surveyor Henry Hellyer (in 1827 and 1828) and the party of George Robinson (in 1834),²³² and climbed by the government triognometrical surveyor James Sprent²³³ (who placed the trig station in about 1843), apparently without recognition of the oxidised capping of the famous deposits. This is hardly surprising given that Australian metal-mining was a new-born infant at the time of Sprent's climb, gold-mining barely known, and that penetrating the Mount Bischoff scrub would have been difficult enough in order to reach the summit,

²²⁷ D R Oldroyd, *Thinking About the Earth: a History of Ideas in Geology*, Athlone, London, 1996, pp.92 and 100

²²⁸ *ibid*, pp.110 and 113

²²⁹ *ibid*, pp.120-1

²³⁰ D R Oldroyd, *Darwinian Impacts: an Introduction to the Darwinian Revolution*, New South Wales University Press, Kensington, New South Wales, 1980, p.74

²³¹ Oldroyd, *Thinking About the Earth*, pp.114, 132-3 and 138

²³² Plomley, *Friendly Mission* 12 June 1834, p.884

²³³ See 'James Sprent (1808-63)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.406-7.

without extending the task to a geological survey. Even the 'last' Australian explorer, Ernest Giles, though he included 'fields of gold and golcondas of gems' in his exploratory realm which extended from 1872 to 1876,²³⁴ was a lackadaisical geologist.²³⁵ James Sprent's son Charles, however, who followed in his father's footsteps, was a skilful geologist who after surveying Smith's Mount Bischoff leases led the expansion of mining on Tasmania's west coast.

James Smith, whose birth bisected the Sprent generations, was fortunate to grow up in the flux of geological debate, the 'formative' years of geology, which must have been a stimulus to independent thought. A small child when Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830-33) appeared, and a novice amateur geologist and gold prospector when Darwin's *Origin of Species* hit the bookshelf in 1859, he would have been virtually a 'clean slate', with little religious dogma with which to grapple. His interest in geology appears to have preceded his wholehearted commitment to Christianity - so that when he *did* embrace religion, it was probably with preconceived ideas about the true age of the earth and the 'accuracy', literal or metaphorical, of the *Book of Genesis*.

One who, like the Reverend William Buckland,²³⁶ tried to reconcile the evidence of geology with *Genesis*, was a Scottish journalist, Hugh Miller, whose discredited arguments have left him almost forgotten outside Scotland. In his first geological text, *The Old Red Sandstone*, published in 1841, the self-taught Miller embraced the lessons of geology which he could use to glorify his God. Lyell's work was 'brilliant', but Miller derided the 'ingenious foreigner' Jean Lamarck's theory of progression, a forerunner to Darwin's theory of natural selection:

The descendants of the *ourang-outang*, for instance, may be employed in some future age in writing treatises on Geology [sic]...Lamarck himself, when bearing home in triumph with him, the skeleton of some huge salamander or crocodile...might indulge, consistently with his

²³⁴ Ray Ericksen, *Ernest Giles: Explorer and Traveller, 1835-1897*, Hesperion, Carlisle, Western Australia, 1997, p.49

²³⁵ *ibid*, p.35

²³⁶ Oldroyd, *Thinking About the Earth*, p.134

theory, in the pleasing belief that he had possessed himself of the bones of his grandfather...²³⁷

By the time his *The Testimony of the Rocks* appeared in 1857, Miller had adopted geological change to the extent of revising his original belief in a literal six-day creation, reasoning that each day must represent a different geological age. The logical extension of that sequence, he believed, was the second coming of Christ, the 'dynasty of the kingdom', of 'God himself in the form of man'.²³⁸ Miller was dead by the time this book was published, and one can only speculate how he would have received Darwin's *Origin of Species* had he lived two years longer. Nevertheless, his works, characterised by a personal, autobiographical style accessible to the layman, sold like popular novels for two decades. Although essentially a popular description of geological formations, *The Old Red Sandstone* contains two significant themes: that the rocks bear the mark of creation, fossils being evidence of God's 'architecture'; and that there is much for workingmen, no matter how constrained by society, to enjoy and benefit from in humble employment. Miller's opening chapter is emphatic about the latter:

My advice to young working-men, desirous of bettering their circumstances, and adding to the amount of their enjoyment, is a very simple one. Do not seek happiness in what is misnamed pleasure; seek it rather in what is termed study. Keep your conscience clear, your curiosity fresh, and embrace every opportunity of cultivating your minds....Learn to make a right use of your eyes: the commonest things are worth looking at - even stones and weeds, and the most familiar animals. Read good books, not forgetting the best of all: there is more true philosophy in the Bible than in every work of every sceptic that ever wrote; and we would all be miserable creatures without it, and none more miserable than you.²³⁹

²³⁷ Hugh Miller, *The Old Red Sandstone; or, New Walks in an Old Field*, Gould and Lincoln, Boston, 4th edn., 1857 (originally published 1841), pp.35-6

²³⁸ Hugh Miller, *The Testimony of the Rocks; or, Geology in its Bearings on the Two Theologies, Natural and Revealed*, Gould and Lincoln, Boston, 1857, p.178

²³⁹ Hugh Miller, *The Old Red Sandstone*, pp.1-2

Miller warns the reader against the rhetoric of Chartism and exhorts him to direct his jealousy of the upper classes to useful purpose: 'Do not let them get ahead of you in intelligence.' The flux of society, he writes, is from time-to-time bound to demote a member of the upper class, replacing him with a workingman,

always the more steady and intelligent among you, remember; if all your minds were cultivated, not merely intellectually, but morally also, you would find yourselves, as a body in the possession of a power which every charter in the world could not confer upon you, and which all the tyranny or injustice of the world could not withstand.²⁴⁰

Miller goes on to recall how two decades earlier he had learned to find 'much happiness in very mean employments' as a boy working as a labourer in a quarry.²⁴¹ The fossilised 'sculptures' revealed by his pick in the geological strata of the cliff filled him with wonder and honed the acute observation which a boyhood curiosity had already awakened.

Much of this tallies with the young Smith's life. Like Miller, Smith had been a 'wanderer among rocks and woods' and 'a reader of curious books when I could get them'.²⁴² Given that Smith had the predilection for study that Miller advocates, it is reasonable to wonder whether he would have read *The Old Red Sandstone* while young. The suspicion is strengthened by a claim by Smith's daughter Annie that the young man set aside money each week for the purchase of books, and spent nearly all his spare time reading the classics and studying science, mineralogy and geology being his favourite subjects.²⁴³ Miller may have been Smith's introduction to the popular Victorian-era concept of 'self-culture' which, along with his spiritual beliefs, appears to have shaped his career. Study and observation of nature (particularly of geology) became the habits of a lifetime and, indeed, Smith's intelligence and achievements *did* eventually allow him to benefit from the flux of society by graduating to the status of a gentleman.

²⁴⁰ *ibid*, p.2

²⁴¹ *ibid*, pp.3-4

²⁴² *ibid*, p.4

²⁴³ Crowther, *James Smith*, p.4

Van Diemen's Land's leading exponent of self-culture during Smith's youth was probably the Aboriginal 'Conciliator' George Robinson. The London bricklayer's lowly working-class status and miserable childhood had fitted him with an 'abject fear of poverty' and a

deep suspicion of the upper classes, which caused him to distrust people in authority and prevented him from communicating with them effectively when it was clearly in his interests to do so.²⁴⁴

On the positive side, like Smith the young Robinson became fiercely determined to 'rise in life'. According to Rae-Ellis,

he took every opportunity of improving his situation through self-education, while keeping an eye open for any chance to assist him in his upward thrust.²⁴⁵

Although Robinson was appointed to his 'mission' only after arriving in Van Diemen's Land, the Evangelical movement furnished the spirit of the time. At the end of the nineteenth century it had prompted an increase in missionary work, particularly in Africa, 'saving' the 'uncivilised' Africans for a heavenly future and simultaneously atoning for previous European enslavement of Africans. An important figure in this movement was the 'abolitionist' William Wilberforce. Arising from the 'heightened morality'²⁴⁶ of the Evangelical movement, the anti-slavery movement, according to Waller

was something unique in British history. While having strong Evangelical undertones, it spread far beyond the parishes to become a nationwide agitation....Demonstrations, petitions and street-corner canvassing [sic] as well as the pulpit spread the message.²⁴⁷

In 1833 an act was passed which aimed to emancipate all slaves in the British territories by the following year.²⁴⁸ Ironically, that deadline also signalled Britain's

²⁴⁴ Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson*, p.5

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, p.6

²⁴⁶ John H Waller, *Gordon of Khartoum: the Saga of a Victorian Hero*, Atheneum, New York, 1988, p.7

²⁴⁷ *ibid*

²⁴⁸ *ibid*

enslavement of the Tasmanian Aborigines: in 1834 George Robinson finished his journeys of 'conciliation' [that is, capture] which removed the Aborigines from mainland Tasmania.

While it is difficult to assess Robinson's possible influence upon the young Smith, the latter possessed Robinson's ambition, but, despite similar beginnings, not his distrust of his 'social betters'. Smith had another form of slavery to contend with. In Van Diemen's Land 'abolition' meant freeing the colony from enslavement to the penal system. In the 1840s depression Launceston was a town on the move.²⁴⁹ The Launceston Mechanics' Institute was established in 1842 to educate its members in the arts and sciences, to amuse them and cultivate their tastes.²⁵⁰ Teetotal banners waved in the streets. A lively press now included the adversarial *Launceston Advertiser* (established in 1829, although this was effectively just a name change) and *Cornwall Chronicle* (1835), and the more responsible *Launceston Examiner* (1842). Launceston was already on its way to being a more vigorous and radical town than Hobart.²⁵¹ From Launceston Batman had journeyed across Bass Strait to establish the rapidly expanding 'village' of Melbourne, with its promise of great commercial trade.²⁵² The anti-transportation movement in Tasmania had its formal beginning in Launceston in 1847, the Reverend John West²⁵³ and James Aikenhead²⁵⁴ making their *Examiner* newspaper its flagship.²⁵⁵ Arriving in Launceston in 1837 at the age of eight, that paper's later proprietor Henry Button was 'greatly shocked' by the 'sickening' sight of a chain gang.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁹ John Reynolds, *Launceston: History of an Australian City*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, pp.72-104

²⁵⁰ Stefan Petrow, *Going to the Mechanics: a History of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842-1914*, Historical Survey of Tasmania series, no. 4, Launceston, 1998, p.1

²⁵¹ W A Townsley, 'Tasmania and the Great Depression, 1858-1872', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 4, no. 2, July 1955, p.44

²⁵² *ibid*

²⁵³ See John Reynolds, 'John West (1809-73)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.590-2.

²⁵⁴ See L L Robson, 'James Aikenhead (1815-87)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.3-4.

²⁵⁵ See Dan Huon, 'By Moral Means Only: the Origins of the Launceston Anti-Transportation Leagues 1847-1849', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 44, no. 2, June 1997, pp.92-119.

²⁵⁶ Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p.41. Henry Button, journalist and author, was very influential in northern society. He was also Smith's friend and supporter throughout his

Elsewhere the gibbet, the stocks and the treadmill were daily reminders of the penal system. 'The stigma of convictism was encountered in every department of social life,' Button wrote. 'A glorious deliverance it was for Tasmania and Australia when the accursed system was brought to a close.'²⁵⁷ The 'Native Youth' found it equally repugnant. The toast of the town in 1845 was Richard 'Dicky' Dry,²⁵⁸ the popular 'equalitarian', one of the 'patriotic Six' who resigned from the Legislative Council as a protest against the use of their taxes to pay for the policing of transportees.²⁵⁹

Smith grew up with this egalitarian spirit, sharing his schooldays with the generation of civic leaders who followed the abolitionists; entrepreneurs, merchant and philanthropists, men such as William Hart,²⁶⁰ Henry Button and Samuel Sutton.²⁶¹ Unlike these three, however, Smith had to contend with the 'hated stain'. Peter Bolger has described how the children of convicts had an 'insecure grasp of cultural tradition'. They had no role model:

Other people had group mores which they could hate or love, grasp or reject as best suited them; but which always served as guidelines for a generation's way of living. The convict sons' experience was truncated since their personal past was not usable as a springboard to life, so bitterly did they reject it.²⁶²

They had a negative drive - to deny the 'hated stain' - but no positive drive to replace it with, no guide to their new lives.²⁶³ Smith was fortunate that his guardian had drummed a work ethic into him. Unlike the young Hugh Miller, however, Smith was finding little happiness in his humble employment when, in 1847, he finally took his independence

Tasmanian mining career. See J C Horner, 'Henry Button (1829-1914)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.318-9.

²⁵⁷ Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, pp.48-9

²⁵⁸ See John Reynolds, 'Sir Richard Dry (1815-69)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.329-30.

²⁵⁹ John Reynolds, *Launceston*, p.82

²⁶⁰ William Hart, businessman and parliamentarian, would become the most prominent Launceston mining financier. See John Reynolds, 'William Hart (1825-1904)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p.356.

²⁶¹ Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, p.207. Businessman and parliamentarian, Sutton is best remembered for establishing the Cataract hydro-electric scheme which brought electric lighting to Launceston in 1895.

²⁶² Bolger, *Hobart Town*, p.149

²⁶³ *ibid*, p.150

from Guilan, who declared him 'a good Honest [sic] and industrious lad.'²⁶⁴ At twenty he had a vocation and had probably embarked upon his self-education (although the earliest evidence of Smith's reading habit is in 1853, when he and two of his housemates were subscribers to the Launceston Mechanics Institute and Library).²⁶⁵ Some of his most important formative experiences, however, still lay ahead of him, and his tremendous drive was presumably not yet fully developed.

While working again at the Supply mill, Smith possibly had his first love affair and, if he had not yet read Hugh Miller, here was another likely introduction to 'self-culture'. The new mill lessees were Staffordshire-born brothers James and John Cartledge, the former having chosen the antipodes over gaol when arrested as a Chartist in Manchester.²⁶⁶ This may have been Smith's first brush with egalitarian philosophy. James Cartledge was not among those Chartists who advocated using physical force in the quest for manhood suffrage (Smith would likewise later condemn violence in the service of protest). The Cartledges were abstainers, so presumably the mill took a different tone to that of the days of Symes and Muir.

Through these brothers, Smith met the earliest female entry in his correspondence files: 18-year-old Mary Ann Spence,²⁶⁷ John Cartledge's sister-in-law, who lived far from the Supply mill at Muddy Plains (Pateena) near Perth. One meeting with Mary Ann cost Smith a severe cold, but a few lines of her verse suggest that the chilling ride home bathed in a warm afterglow:

May all pleasure and Delight,
Crown your day and bless your night,
And may your oft repeated kisses,
Bring with them as many Blissess.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ John Guilan to Smith 3 June 1847 no 112.5, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁶⁵ *Annual Report 1853*, Launceston Mechanics' Institute papers, MMSS 79, Box 1, (Local Studies Collection, Launceston Library)

²⁶⁶ *A Cartledge Family History* website, strider.dmad.net/tree

²⁶⁷ According to the *Tasmanian Pioneers Index*, Mary Ann Spence was born in 1831 and died in 1906.

²⁶⁸ Mary Ann Spence to Smith 6 July 1849, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

Spence's rhyming banter foreshadows not only Smith's own poetic bent, but the regular exchange of verse that reputedly often passed between him and the woman who would be his wife.²⁶⁹ Perhaps Mary Ann Spence was Smith's original muse.

Like John Guilan, the Cartledges appear to have been stern masters. They challenged the young Smith's industriousness:

we each have a duty to perform in and to society....What talents you possess use them and not let them get rusty. Let your reading your studying your writing yes all you do be to profit as you shall have to give an account at last...²⁷⁰

Tenets of self-culture are familiar slogans today: struggle, adversity and self-denial (that is, the sacrifice of self-gratification for a future good) are character-building; the love of money is the root of evil; every individual has a part to play in the progress of mankind; God helps those who help themselves. Self-improvers still feature in contemporary hagiography, just as they did in the Victorian era. Davison cites the 1992 example of Sara Henderson, whose best-selling autobiographies recounted 'her rise from marital disaster to Businesswoman of the Year'.²⁷¹

As Miller suggests, self-culture offered the lowly-born such as Smith the chance to take a higher place in life, one based upon character rather than birth. Samuel Smiles would write later, in 1859, that 'The poor man with a rich spirit is in all ways superior to the rich man with a poor spirit'.²⁷² Men, according to Smiles, must be 'active agents of their own well-being and well-doing', but the achievement mattered less than the knowledge, discipline and satisfaction gained in the effort, in the struggle itself. Ironically Smiles quoted the educationalist Doctor Arnold to illustrate the benefits of struggle:

²⁶⁹ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson. An exchange of letters in 1873 is the only written, primary confirmation of this: see Smith to Mary Jane Love 18 August 1873; and Mary Jane Love to Smith, scrap of letter, undated, no. 149, both NS234/5/1 (AOT).

²⁷⁰ James and John Cartledge to Smith 28 January 1852, no. 5, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁷¹ Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, p.26

²⁷² Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1986 (originally published 1859), p.35

I would far rather send a boy to Van Diemen's Land, where he must work for his bread, than send him to Oxford to live in luxury, without any desire in his mind to avail himself of his advantages.²⁷³

According to this charter then, young Smith, a first generation Van Diemonian, had the 'advantage' of much to struggle with. 'Shameful' beginnings, with convict parents, abandonment, insecurity, a workingman's daily grind. His weapons for combating these were a sharp intellect and tremendous drive. He needed to harness and direct these to some worthwhile purpose.

Smiles would state that the most stirring example of this free energy of individuals uniting for a common good was England's vigorous growth as a nation, and the Industrial Revolution in particular provided many individual models - Watt, Arkwright and George Stephenson among them. It was symptomatic of Smith's widening vision that his models would be men of righteousness and enlightenment rather than creators of steam and cogwheels. A site on William Street in central Launceston represents the triumph of Smith's will over the drudgery of working-class toil. Here, where the Mount Bischoff Company smelters would later belch fumes over the steamers that turned their pure tin into export pounds, Smith put in his final stint of full-time employment, returning to the management of the Bridge mill, where John Thompson was the lessee.²⁷⁴ This time Smith's early application beat Monds to the top job, although in reality Monds's superior milling skill made him the ersatz manager anyway.

In 1849 and 1850 Smith also showed his industriousness by selling palings in Launceston and Melbourne.²⁷⁵ It was probably while crossing Bass Strait on such business that he explored another chapter of Tasmanian folklore: he met a man who claimed to be Thomas Kent, the one-time Macquarie Harbour convict whose occupation and escape up the western coast gave the Pieman River its name. The naming of the Pieman River has often been wrongly associated with the macabre escapes of Alexander Pearce, the Irish cannibal reinvented as Matt Gabbett in Marcus Clarke's *For*

²⁷³ *ibid*

²⁷⁴ Monds, *Autobiography*, p.31

²⁷⁵ Smith accounts NS234/4/1 (AOT)

the Term of His Natural Life.²⁷⁶ Smith, like Henry Button before him, stated that the alleged Kent claimed to have been apprehended after turning back when he found the Pieman too broad and deep to cross. Kent also claimed to have found the remains of another defeated escapee:

Once while suffering terribly from hunger, he was much disconcerted at seeing the skeleton of a man in a sombre scrub, with the front of the skull directed towards him, and his distorted imagination fancied for a moment as if inviting him, and yet defying him, to escape from companionship in the fate which had overtaken him to whom it had belonged, and whose death doubtless resulted from starvation and exposure.

At length, however, his wanderings were brought to an abrupt conclusion, for while crossing the channel of a deep creek he heard a voice exclaim, 'Stand, or I'll blow the roof of your head off;' and looking up he saw a constable, whom he well knew, with his musket presented at him, and he quietly surrendered.²⁷⁷

By the early 1850s the final element of Smith's moral framework appears to have been put in place. He lived in a house on George Street, Launceston, with Monds and three other old school chums likewise graduated to journeymen, Robert Cowl, William Archer and John Sherlock.²⁷⁸ All of them attended the Tamar Street Independent (or Congregationalist) Church conducted by the Reverend Charles Price,²⁷⁹ who was a firm advocate of self-improvement.

²⁷⁶ Marcus Clarke, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, Australian Print Group, 1988 (originally published 1874). See also Dan Sprod, *Alexander Pearce of Macquarie Harbour*, Cat & Fiddle, Hobart, 1977; and 'Marcus Andrew Hislop Clarke (1846-81)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.416-8.

²⁷⁷ Henry Button, 'The River Pieman' (editorial), *Examiner* 22 April 1865; J S (James Smith), 'The Discoverer of the Pieman River', *Examiner* 20 June 1865, p.3. Kent, according to Dan Sprod, received a conditional pardon in 1848, two years before Smith's encounter with him. Smith's account of Kent's trip, however, is contradicted by that outlined by Sprod, *Alexander Pearce of Macquarie Harbour*, pp.114-5.

²⁷⁸ Monds, *Autobiography*, p.32

²⁷⁹ See G L Lockley, 'Charles Price (1807-91)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.350-1.

Smith's adoption of Congregationalism suggests an enquiring, independent mind and a personal faith. Congregationalism was a form of Protestantism which held that the congregation governed itself in religious matters, without the institutionalised rituals of the Church of England and the 'tyranny of the bishops' or presbyteries.

Since the Church of England was officially sanctioned in England and its colonies, Congregationalists despised government interference in religion, and the traditional exclusion of 'Nonconformists' from English universities had made them strong advocates of non-sectarian education. In America, Congregationalists had established many non-sectarian educational institutions, including Harvard and Yale Universities.

Intellectual freedom was a defining characteristic even of the seventeenth-century Puritanism in which Congregationalism was rooted. The wealthy, Puritanical middle-class 'set the tone' of English life during the Victorian era, the social basis of which was 'religious fundamentalism, intellectual certainty, economic individualism [free trade] and social austerity'.²⁸⁰ Victorian Puritans typically believed that material prosperity was evidence of God's approval, and that 'Satan finds mischief for idle hands', which blamed the poor for their condition.²⁸¹ There were obvious attractions to the rising middle class in

a religion and social outlook which sanctified men's ambition, justified their selfishness, and castigated the vices which they had neither the time nor the inclination to pursue.²⁸²

Although an Anglican, anti-slavery campaigner William Wilberforce was noted as a peripheral inclusion in the all-time Top 100 Congregationalists voted in 1927. What he had in common with Cromwell, the Pilgrim Fathers and other inductees was an extraordinary individual energy and determination exerted in the name of God. Missionaries David Livingstone and James Chalmers; poets Robert and Elizabeth

²⁸⁰ *ibid*, pp.74 and 118

²⁸¹ *ibid*, pp.73 and 78

²⁸² *ibid*, p.74

Barrett Browning and John Milton; and the seventeenth-century lay preacher and author, John Bunyan, also figured in the Top 100.²⁸³

Although the Brownings were Smith contemporaries unlikely to have influenced his choice of denomination or his life's calling, Bunyan probably did. Vincent considers Bunyan's description of the trials of Christian in *The Pilgrim's Progress* to have been the 'rock' upon which nineteenth-century working-class 'self-improvers' based their efforts and in which they found solace and inspiration.²⁸⁴ It is likely that Smith read Bunyan, and that, as discussed in later chapters, after 1857 he found inspiration in contemporary accounts of the 'heroic' African journeys of Livingstone, another favourite of the self-improvers.

Unformed Christian colonies were highly amenable to proselytism, as Congregationalists had discovered in America:

In the colony there is more freedom in the thoughts of men, more independent action, more love of self-management, and far less of conventional restraint, a state of society favourable to...principles which aim to establish no authority but their own truth, and no power but their own moral force.²⁸⁵

Accordingly, Congregationalism quickly won disciples in northern Tasmania. Since it allowed for worship in a private home or, for that matter, a stable, dedicated missionaries could reach and spread the word through rural communities at an early stage. Congregationalism and Congregationalists also played a leading role in Launceston society,²⁸⁶ and their influence upon Smith undoubtedly extended beyond his religious education. Congregationalists were prominent in fields in which he was or would become passionately interested: the press (especially as a moral force), self-improvement and mining. The Reverend John West, James Aikenhead and J S Waddell established the *Launceston Examiner* newspaper; another Congregationalist, Henry

²⁸³ Albert Peel, *A Hundred Eminent Congregationalists 1530-1924*, Independent Press, London, 1927

²⁸⁴ David Vincent, 'Miller's Improvement: a Classic Tale of Self-Advancement?', in (ed. Michael Shortland), *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p.233

²⁸⁵ Stowe, 'Congregationalism in the Colonies' p.19

Button, who joined the staff in 1845,²⁸⁷ would become its editor and sole proprietor. The Launceston Mechanics' Institute was established almost simultaneously with the *Examiner*, its principal proponents being West, Aikenhead, Waddell, W S and Thomas Button and Price.²⁸⁸ West wrote *History of Tasmania*²⁸⁹ and later edited the *Sydney Morning Herald* (another Congregationalist, James Fenton, would write the next history of Tasmania). During the 1850s, Aikenhead, the chemist Landon Fairthorne, W S and Thomas Button and Waddell - all Congregationalists - were involved in the first north-western mining venture, the Mersey Coal Company.²⁹⁰ It is probably no coincidence that only a few months after this company was formed, Smith, fresh from the Victorian goldfields, selected land within ten kilometres of the coal operation. Coal-mining at the Mersey would be a catalyst for mineral exploration in the north-west.

There is little evidence available by which to gauge the influence of the Reverend Charles Price, specifically, upon Smith. They shared little written correspondence. It was possibly a profound influence, however, given that for Price Christianity and self-improvement appear to have been inextricably bonded. Price's appointment to Launceston in 1836 established Congregationalist evangelism in the north of the colony.²⁹¹ In 1842 he delivered the inaugural lecture under the auspices of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, on 'Objects, Advantages, and Pleasures of Science',²⁹² by which he himself was apparently enthralled. He later lectured on natural history, astronomy, phrenology and temperance. The minister 'practised what he preached'. An insatiable reader from childhood, he epitomised bringing progressive thought to practical account by building scientific apparatus with which to illustrate his lectures, and also early telephones, microphones and Daguerrotypes. Significantly, perhaps, for Smith, Price had a working knowledge of geology. He was, according to James Fenton,

²⁸⁶ See Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, pp.50-63.

²⁸⁷ *ibid*, p.91

²⁸⁸ Petrow, *Going to the Mechanics*, p.115

²⁸⁹ John West, *History of Tasmania*, Henry Dowling, Launceston, 1852

²⁹⁰ Charles Ramsay, *With the Pioneers*, Latrobe, 1979, p.121

²⁹¹ Theo E Sharples, *Congregationalism in Tasmania 1830-1977: a Brief History*, Hobart, 1977. James Fenton, in his *The Life and Work of the Reverend Charles Price*, George Robertson & Company, Melbourne, 1886, p. 30, asserts that Price was the first Congregationalist minister in Australia.

²⁹² James Fenton, *The Life and Work*, p.91

amongst the first to test mineral-bearing stone for gold, tin, and copper, which had been brought to him from different parts of the colony, and his assays led to discoveries in several places.²⁹³

In 1850, while Smith worked about 30 kilometres from Launceston in his second stint at the Supply mill, Price delivered the lecture 'On the Intellectual Improvement of the Working Classes', which was invested with almost enough revolutionary zeal to be mistaken for a contemporary harangue in the socialist circles of St Petersburg:

The intellectual nature of the working classes demands improvement. It has commenced, and will go forward in spite of all opposition. It is determined to tread down the already mouldering traditions in law and science, and religion, by which the working classes have been kept in the prison-house of ignorance, grinding for the pampered few. The day of light has dawned, and the millions feel that they have minds of their own to think for themselves, as well as bodies to work for others.²⁹⁴

Yet the 'revolution' was the same 'Workingman's True Policy'²⁹⁵ that Hugh Miller had recommended, with the same 'good book' at its heart:

As Christianity is unfolding its mysteries, hidden for ages from the multitude, they see that there is an immortal intellectual future for the workman as well as his master; and this discovery gives an impulse to the desire for mental freedom and improvement...²⁹⁶

Among the chief obstacles to enlightenment, according to Price, were intemperance and 'light and trashy literature'.²⁹⁷ His message had a patriotic verve similar to that which Smith would express almost two decades later:

If this country [the soon-to-be Tasmania] is to advance, its laboring community must grow in mental power, and maintain a position only

²⁹³ *ibid*, pp.95-6

²⁹⁴ Charles Price, *On the Intellectual Improvement of the Working Classes, 1850*, quoted in (ed. Paul Fenton), *James Fenton of Forth: a Tasmanian Pioneer 1820-1901: a Collection of Essays About James Fenton (1820-1901), His Family and Friends*, Educare, Melbourne, 2001, pp.335-6

²⁹⁵ Hugh Miller, *The Old Red Sandstone*, p.1

²⁹⁶ Price, *On the Intellectual Improvement of the Working Classes*, p.336

²⁹⁷ *ibid*

tenable by earnest thought, and progressive improvement in knowledge. It is in vain to cry 'Advance Tasmania,' unless the people will read, think, and study, as well as sow wheat and shear sheep. Neither gold mines nor sheep walks, nor fertile fields, will secure the permanent prosperity of a country if its people become indolent, unthinking, or luxurious: the material products are all subordinate to the mental culture....²⁹⁸

While it is unknown whether Smith attended any of Price's lectures during his adolescence or early adulthood, the minister's conviction that Christianity was a liberating force in the quest for intellectual development makes it likely that the message of self-improvement carried over into his sermons which Smith did hear.

Smith's Congregationalism had certainly been 'softened' or 'warmed'. He was humble and liberal-minded. Smith observed the Sabbath whether at home or in the bush. He equated prosperity with the will of God, but his charitable acts would make it clear that he did not adhere to the traditional Puritanical association of poverty with idleness. In the absence of a confessional diary, it is uncertain whether Smith, like George Renison Bell, felt the need to reproach himself for vices and bad habits in order to attain the path to salvation. The Puritan preference for vigorous exercise, in the form of walking, mountain-climbing and nature study, would have suited Smith perfectly.²⁹⁹

Smith's adoption of religion, apparently one of the key events in his life, may have been a similar act of purification (as to some extent, perhaps, were his patriotism, sense of public duty and leadership in moral causes) to those described by Peter Bolger in his assessment of the behaviour of emancipists.³⁰⁰ Monds believed that, by curbing his temper, his faith (or an 'arresting power', as Monds called it) set him on his successful life's course.³⁰¹ Almost as importantly, it appears to have shaped Smith's lifelong friendships and business associations, perhaps even influencing where he lived. It seems only natural that he would associate with and gravitate towards like-minded

²⁹⁸ *ibid.* Compare this passage to, for instance, Smith's poem 'Hail Tasmania!' (1869).

²⁹⁹ Marlowe, *Puritan Tradition in English Life*, p.122

³⁰⁰ Bolger, *Hobart Town*, p.151

³⁰¹ Monds, *Autobiography*, p. 28

people, especially enquiring minds who hungered for knowledge and truth. Monds aside, several of Smith's closest friends - Henry Button, Thomas Hainsworth and James Fenton - would share the Congregationalist faith, and he would have close ties also with Congregationalist ministers, especially the Reverend William Law (John West's replacement in Launceston) and Walter Mathison, who served for many years at the Forth. Christian values would be a common theme in his mining career and business dealings. Even by 1850 he was finding a society to which he could belong. Then, however, something that gleamed brighter than a thousand coal measures, brighter, perhaps, even than the promise of eternal life, entered the picture.

Chapter 2: To the Gold Rushes

Everyman was courted. Never were individual hopes massed and mobilised as they were by the global free-for-all sparked in California. Gold, according to Blainey,

had a magnetism which the welfare state has dulled. To win gold was the only honest chance millions of people had of bettering themselves, of gaining independence, of storing money for an old age or sickness, of teaching their children to read or write. The 1840s had been a decade of revolution and misery and famine in Europe, and now across the globe was a gigantic lottery in which all had a chance and the strong-armed labourer the highest chance. Gold was the magic formula in an age without football pools or state lotteries or social services.¹

Some of the contrasting images of this romanticised era suggest that mining is schizophrenic, or at least bipolar. In the century (from about 1850 to 1950) that probably made more fortunes than any equivalent period, one thousand American coal miners died on the job each year² and perhaps more than 10,000 quartz miners in Australia alone coughed and spat themselves to death from the 'miner's disease', caused by inhaling silica dust sprayed by mechanical rock drills.³ While thousands downed ploughshares and quill pens to celebrate the revival of 'yellow fever' at the Kimberley on Australia's north-western frontier, at Tsar Alexander III's Nerchinsk silver mines in Siberia, penal reform campaigner George Kennan described exiles crammed into fetid cells painted with their own blood.⁴

¹ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.38

² John L Lewis; cited by Wolfgang Paul, in *Mining Lore: an Illustrated Composition and Documentary Compilation with Emphasis on the Spirit and History of Mines*, Portland, Oregon, 1970, p.519

³ As Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.293, points out, in reality 'miner's disease' was two diseases: silicosis and tuberculosis.

⁴ That is, the prisoners' blood daubed the walls as the result of them killing thousands of fleas that sucked it. George Kennan, *Siberia and the Exile System*, Praeger, New York, 1970 (originally published 1891), vol. 2, p.293

Yet not even the Wall Street crash that adapted the skyscrapers above to swan-diving and pistol swallowing could silence the rollicking brotherhood.⁵ They had (or liked to shout that they had) battled mules, fever and bad whisky in California and Colorado,⁶ scorched the Siberian permafrost,⁷ scraped the Yukon sourdough pot dry,⁸ and now, dreaming with Harry Lasseter, they still yearned to chase that uncoined global currency.⁹ In Australia gold was apparently impervious to mundanities like the Great Depression.¹⁰ As the rising shadow of the Empire State Building reminded Manhattan that a poor man could still make his fortune,¹¹ the reputedly larger yet Errol Flynn and other pursuers of the same theme out-roistered even Baron von Munchausen among the head-hunters, bloodsucking bats and poisonous kunai grass of New Guinea's Edey Creek rush.¹²

In reality, many of those who began their working lives kicking up their heels as diggers, finished them shuffling off their dreams as waged miners - and made more money that way.¹³ Mining, particularly underground mining, has often been debilitating and dangerous, but for all the images of slavery or class-based servitude - chained Incans lashed by the Conquistador,¹⁴ coal-blackened infants crouched in English galleries,¹⁵ human draught-horses driving the fabled salt (and gold, silver, coal, copper and, eventually, uranium)¹⁶ mines of Tsarist Russia and Stalinist Soviet Union - the

⁵ Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan-Witts, *The Day the Bubble Burst: a Social History of the Wall Street Crash of 1929*, Doubleday & Co, New York, 1979, pp.396, 403-4

⁶ See William S Greever, *The Bonanza West: the Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848-1900*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963, Chapter 3: 'California Miners'; and Chapter 7: 'Early Days in Colorado'.

⁷ Greever, *The Bonanza West*, p.362

⁸ *ibid*; Herbert L Heller, *Sourdough Sagas: the Journals, Memoirs, Tales, and Recollections of the Earliest Alaskan Gold Miners, 1883-1923*, World Publishing Co, Cleveland, 1967, p.1

⁹ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, pp.310-5

¹⁰ *ibid*, p.301

¹¹ Thomas and Morgan-Witts, *The Day the Bubble Burst*, p.21

¹² Errol Flynn, *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*, G P Putnam's Sons, London, 1959, pp.66-8

¹³ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.286

¹⁴ See Hammond Innes, *The Conquistadors*, Collins, London, 1969.

¹⁵ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.652

¹⁶ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago 1918-1956: an Experiment in Literary Investigation*, Collins and Harvill, London, 1978, Vol III-IV, p.593; Vol V-VII, pp.56 and 375; J Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System: a Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror, 1930-1953*, McFarland and Co, Jefferson, North Carolina, 1997, pp.39-40; Karlo Stajner, *Seven Thousand Days in Siberia*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, Toronto, 1988, p.303

profession has also been associated with philanthropy¹⁷ and spirituality,¹⁸ and likened to an aristocracy.¹⁹

In medieval England and Germany, reforms recognised that miners were highly valued contributors to the power and safety of the realm. While gold and silver mines remained the property of the Crown in England, King John granted miners a charter which freed them from serfdom, established their own courts and enabled them to prospect on private land on payment of a tribute.²⁰ An enlightened Bishop of Trent in South Tyrol (now part of Italy) granted the German miner similar privileges. The first great mining migration - a precursor to America's nineteenth-century bonanza - was of Saxon adventurers east across the Elbe River.²¹ In the 1500s, sustained warfare further magnified the importance of German metal suppliers and artisans. In 'free cities' such as Freiburg, miners were a privileged class, almost a lesser nobility, exempt from taxation and military service and granted freedom of worship, trade and employer.²²

Much of this privilege and power had been eroded away by the seventeenth century. With the scale of European mining now escalating dramatically, increasing demand for metals necessitated work at deeper levels than ever before - 'lode' mining.²³ The capital required for such operations being beyond the individual purse, mining became the preserve of large companies, and the miners their waged employees, a trend intensified by the demands of the Industrial Revolution.

Then suddenly the miner - but *not just* the miner - had the chance to make his own capital in a global democracy. He had not so much regained his old status as usurped the system. Alluvial gold-mining required little outlay, no experience and, usually, no underground incarceration. You need not be an artisan or a metallurgist to wash gold in a pan or dig a shaft to the bedrock. The hale and hearty - farm labourers, seamen,

¹⁷ For prospector and miner as philanthropist, see Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, pp.582-6, 594-6 and 865.

¹⁸ See, for example Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, pp. 175-85, 327-57 and 457-81; and Oswald Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1962, pp.166-72.

¹⁹ See, for instance, Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.299; and Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.861.

²⁰ Cedric E Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, Swets and Zeitlinger, Lisse, Netherlands, 2001, p.140

²¹ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.863

²² Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.140

shepherds, clerks - and especially the lucky, with a fortnight's digging could untie the bonds of heraldry and poverty. The Californian '49er' was seen as a new breed of western pioneer. He was fiercely independent, equipped with

idealistic eagerness for adventure akin to that of a patriot volunteering

for army service the first week after the declaration of war.²⁴

For Mark Twain, the rush to the American west was a celebration of vigorous young manhood:

not simpering, dainty, kid-gloved weaklings, but stalwart, muscular, dauntless young braves, brimful of push and energy, and royally endowed with every attribute that goes to make up a peerless and magnificent manhood - the very pick and choice of the world's glorious ones...²⁵

The Californian rushes, which mixed tyros with professional miners from Cornwall, Germany, Spain and other countries,²⁶ established the *modus operandi* of gold digging. The most basic method was panning in a stream, washing and raking out the dirt from a tin dish to leave, hopefully, specks of the precious metal. A faster method of obtaining gold was to use a wooden box or trough known as a cradle, through which the washdirt was sieved with a rocking action. Better yet was the long tom, virtually a larger, immobilised cradle which by a more elaborate process caught more gold particles in its grooved base.²⁷

Australia's manly rites of passage followed in 1851. Gold-digging 'down under' was at first fettered by the age-old British Crown possession of gold and silver deposits,²⁸ but momentum alone forced the governments of New South Wales and Victoria to indulge the swarming diggers, extracting the Crown's due in the form of a licence to dig which also served to reinforce the apparently threatened social order:

²³ *ibid*, p.141

²⁴ Greever, *The Bonanza West*, pp.595-6

²⁵ Mark Twain, *Roughing It*, London, undated, pp.132-3

²⁶ Greever, *The Bonanza West*, p.47

²⁷ *ibid*, pp.47-8

²⁸ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.16

The licence was a tax on the unsuccessful digger, forcing him back to his farm or forge. It was a passport to be issued to no man who had left his previous employer without leave.²⁹

To the Californian extraction techniques, Australian diggers added puddling, which was effectively large-scale cradling. Slabs were placed in the base of a pit, which received water and the earth to be treated. A horse turned an axle in the pit, rotating a rake which carried away the detritus and left the gold to be collected from the slabs beneath.³⁰ Chance finds and simple techniques were the ally of bumbling 'new chums' who had little understanding of the new, evolving science of mineralogy:

Some averred it had anciently rained gold, and that from volcanic heat. Others thought lightning had a great part to play in the manufacture of auriferous gravel. A few guessed that the gold got washed out of the mountains into river beds. Imaginative diggers suggested the draining of our shallow lakes in basalt country. A young friend of mine was convinced that gold grew where we found it, and he claimed a peculiar sort of clay as the matrix of gold. Another saw in mica the 'Mother of Gold.'³¹

The gold rushes were a great leveller in the 'stagnating' penal colony of Van Diemen's Land, with its two-class society of free settlers on the one hand, and convicts and convict emancipists on the other. Niel Black,³² the powerful squatter of western Victoria, regarded the Van Diemen's Land gold diggers as great 'bouncers'. Black, who could not have imagined that his own grandson would be a Tasmanian gold digger half a century later,³³ reported that the islander entered a room

²⁹ *ibid*

³⁰ James Bonwick, *An Octogenarian's Reminiscences*, Nichols, London, 1902, pp.150-2

³¹ *ibid*, p.153

³² See Russel Ward, 'Niel Black (1804-80)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.171-2.

³³ Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, p.100

with a swaggering air of great importance, his looks and manners evincing that the world is his own and that in it he has no equal...³⁴

Gentleman status, theoretically, was now as close as the next nugget. So many of Her Majesty's criminals absconded to Victoria that abolitionists regarded Van Diemen's Land as a staging-post on the sponsored voyage from England to the goldfields.³⁵ Evasion of the boarding officer at George Town was easy, although crossing the strait held its own rigours. James Fenton recalled how on his Port Phillip foray in February 1852 an intended digger concealed his lady friend, a prisoner of the Crown, by nailing her inside a wooden case. Unfortunately, a bale of hay was loaded over her ventilation holes, suffocating her.³⁶ The dreary voyage from Launceston to booming Melbourne often lasted a week, passengers and cargo being bundled together in squalid conditions and regaled by rum-sodden diggers garrulous upon the respective merits of Bendigo, Mount Alexander and Ballarat.³⁷ Hobsons Bay at the mouth of the Yarra River resembled 'a Devon forest of dry standing trees with innumerable masts of ships, stripped of their canvas, most of them deserted by their crews...'³⁸

The magnetic effect of Victorian gold was not lost on James Smith. It reached him when, bored with monotonous mill work and possibly broken-hearted, he had already decided to leave the island. Perhaps, with Griffiths as his model, he also saw a change of colony as an escape from his wretched, convict-stained upbringing. His forty-four-year-old guardian had died after an accident with a waterwheel³⁹ (leaving Smith to deal with his creditors)⁴⁰, and his romance with Mary Ann Spence appears to have ended (she married in July 1852),⁴¹ leaving him few ties in Launceston. While Monds married

³⁴ Lloyd Robson, quoted by Michael Roe, 'Eulogy for Lloyd Robson (1931-90)', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 37, no. 4, December 1990, p.138

³⁵ *Examiner* 8 February 1852, reporting a story in the *Spectator*

³⁶ James Fenton, *Bush Life in Tasmania 50 Years Ago*, C L Richmond, Devonport, 1964 (originally published 1891), p.158

³⁷ *ibid*

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ T W Monds, *Autobiography of Thomas Wilkes Monds*, A J Pasmore, Launceston, 1907, p. 31. The official cause of death was 'hectic fever' (register no. 383, 20/4/1851, [AOT]).

⁴⁰ John Clark to Smith 5 July 1851, no. 3, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴¹ Mary Ann Spence married William White 7 July 1852. The couple had seven children (*Tasmanian Pioneers Index*).

and settled down, Smith and his friends Robert Cowl and William Archer sought their fortunes.

The gold rushes cured Smith's restlessness - even as they gave him the exploration 'bug'. His small Victorian nest egg would enable him to resettle in Tasmania with a home base for continued prospecting. These were his rites of passage as a prospector; the outdoor life and the heady rush of discovery were intoxicating. The experiences of learning to live in the bush, fending for himself and marshalling diverse men in prospecting parties would be invaluable in his future mining and business career. The diggings also provide the first evidence of some of Smith's guiding principles, particularly his public-spiritedness and concern for the worker.

After the insular society of Launceston, Mount Alexander and Bendigo must have been an eye-opener. Smith, whose introduction to mining appears to have been convicts forced to sieve shells from the chilling waters of Bass Strait, was now exposed to large contingents of Irish, Cornish, Germans and Americans, their respective mining philosophies and techniques as well as their cultures. He got a grounding in alluvial gold mining and prospecting and would have been disavowed of the idea of making an 'easy' fortune. A month at the gold rushes had the vigour of a lifetime in Van Diemen's Land, or so it must have seemed at first, before the drudgery of mud and spuds set in, and the cross-country dance from one excavated creekbed to the next parched the digger's face like a map of channel country.

The world-wide mining community would introduce Smith to a vast range of well-travelled men. One was George Anderson, who had abandoned an Arts degree at the University of Aberdeen to oversee a Ceylonese (Sri Lankan) plantation before seeking work in Tasmania as a private tutor.⁴² In September 1851 Anderson and one of the young Fletchers he had been instructing at Talentyre, on the Lake River near Cressy, had succumbed to gold fever. After trying their luck on the famous Turon River goldfield in New South Wales, they made for the famous but soon to be abandoned Mount

⁴² G H Crawford, *George Anderson*, 1968, p.1, unpublished manuscript held by Bruce Crawford, Launceston, which contains excerpts from Anderson's goldfields diary.

Alexander, midway between Ballarat and Bendigo.⁴³ This field was also Smith's introduction to surface mining.⁴⁴

When Smith parted ways with Cowl and Archer is uncertain, but his daughter Annie recorded that George Anderson, Melmoth Fletcher and Richard Smith (later the Reverend Richard Smith, of Table Cape) became his camp-mates.⁴⁵ Anderson, who later settled at Circular Head, recalled that (probably at Forest Creek in April 1852) Smith nursed him through the worst illness of his life on a diet of toast and water.⁴⁶ Such comradeship, the stuff of digger lore,⁴⁷ and the camaraderie Smith experienced in Victoria would be repeated only occasionally during his prospecting career.

The young men took turns to prepare the midday meal. Toast and water may have been George Anderson's limit as a cook: Annie remembered her father chuckling (Ronald, who once claimed to have never seen his father laugh, must have been absent) as he recalled arriving at camp to see Anderson preparing a currant pudding by plunging the small fruit one by one into a ball of dough with his finger.⁴⁸

Anderson's goldfields diary gives a picture of the conditions Smith must have endured at this time.⁴⁹ Burning heat, voracious leeches, a myriad of flies that turned into a swarm of mosquitoes at nightfall, and the constant threat of theft of tools or earnings made hard labour with pick and shovel dispiriting to all but the lucky few. If a life-threatening illness was not trouble enough, while recovering from it Anderson was

⁴³ Crawford, *George Anderson*, p.13

⁴⁴ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁴⁵ A B Crowther, *James Smith*, A3160 (Mitchell Library), p.5

⁴⁶ George Anderson to Smith 9 September 1861, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁷ This, for instance, echoes James Marshall's nursing back to health of the critically ill Jack Abbott on the Californian goldfields; and Mark Ireland's recollection of Connelly's kindness to him when he was delirious after breaking his thigh. See George F Parsons, *The Life and Adventures of James W Marshall, the Discoverer of Gold in California*, George Fields, San Francisco, 1935, pp.89-90; and Mark Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast of Tasmania from 1876 to 1913*, Examiner, Launceston, 1915?, p.42.

⁴⁸ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith and the Discovery of Tin at Mount Bischoff', 1947, 6-701C, ML MSS (Mitchell Library), p.5. A B Crowther, *James Smith*, p.5, does not name the pudding-maker; but Anderson is suggested by her phrase 'a man with a degree at a great English University'.

⁴⁹ Crawford, *George Anderson*, pp.14-7

'providentially' spared when a bank into which he had been driving collapsed the moment he emerged from the hole.⁵⁰

By October 1852 Smith had shifted to the upper Loddon River. James Bonwick described the busy field:

It is quite a beehive. Men are flitting about in strange disguise. Heads are popping up and down in various holes around you. The population are digging, wheeling, carrying or washing....What with genuine soldiers, pensioners and police, there is a force of about 200 men. There you will see the depository of Gold, awaiting the escorts to carry it to town, and there is the place where for thirty shillings you may procure the talisman of a license.⁵¹

The squalor and especially the company on this field dismayed one of Smith's Launceston contemporaries, the fellow Congregationalist Henry Button, who had perhaps enjoyed a more sheltered upbringing than he:

Sincerely I do wish myself back in Launceston again. This style of life is not at all suited to me. Shut up with blackguards whose ungoverned animal propensities lead them to indulge perpetually in filthy jests, I turn from looking at them with disgust.⁵²

Smith, however, continued on to Creswick, north of Ballarat. In 1853 he tried his luck at Bendigo, at a time when the great alluvial deposits were beginning to be worked out.⁵³ In the following year economic depression would sweep the colony and the influx of Chinese diggers would deepen the discontent already fomenting in the gullies. As yet there was no town. Rough slab and canvas stores were rising. Well-disguised sly-grog

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.21

⁵¹ James Bonwick, *Notes of a Gold Digger and Gold Diggers' Guide*, Hawthorn Press, Melbourne, 1942 (originally published 1852), pp.5 and 6. See Guy Featherstone, 'James Bonwick (1817-1906)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.190-2.

⁵² Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania*, A W Birchall and Sons, Launceston, 1909, p.196

⁵³ Frank Cusack, *Bendigo: a History*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1973, p.71. This, Smith's notes (NS 234/14/7 [AOT]) and the special Eureka edition of *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 6, no. 23, November 1954, are the sources consulted for background information on the Bendigo goldfield.

shops and tent theatres⁵⁴ entertained many of the thousands of men (and some women) gathered in enclaves along the valley, who by day sifted the surface riches of about one hundred creeks and gullies. The lifestyle was simple:

We live in canvas homes, or huts of bark and logs. Free ventilation is universally adopted on Hygean principles. Our furniture is of a simple character. A box, a block of wood, or a bit of paling across a pail, serves as a table; though a few among us scorn such indulgence. Some luxurious ones positively have rough stools as seats; the majority recline upon their beds, or make use of a log, the ground, or a pail turned upside down. Our dinner service comprises not many pieces. We have those who indulge in plates, knives and forks; but it must not be supposed that all are so fastidious.⁵⁵

Evenings were for eating, rest, drying clothes and drying the cradled gold over a fire.⁵⁶ Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning were for cooking:

The same camp oven has, perhaps, to turn out two loaves, a baked joint for dinner, and mystery of mysteries, a boiled plum pudding in the bargain. Add to all this, potatoes, when you can afford to pay for them, not forgetting a few boiled onions, should you chance to boil in your oven a leg of mutton.⁵⁷

The 'new chum' often began by panning or by identifying an abandoned claim.⁵⁸ Then the back-breaking work began:

You...strike in your claim as near to the centre of the gully as possible, mark your boundaries...and at once to vigorous exercise of muscle...all goes pretty smoothly until the pick comes into contact with something that drives it back again, with the loss perhaps of its steel point.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Cusack, *Bendigo: a History*, p.35

⁵⁵ Bonwick, *Notes of a Gold Digger*, p.20

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.14

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.21

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.7

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p.8

Blacksmiths must have made a fortune. Some diggers fared better than suggested above. Smith's later Tasmanian prospecting contemporary Skelton Buckley (S B) Emmett initially avoided pick and shovel labour by sifting 3.5 ounces of gold from an old tailings heap by a waterhole. Emmett's three Victorian stints were surprisingly serendipitous for one whose later prospecting career was an elegy to 'the one that got away'. He spotted the prized sparkle in quartz which was being crushed as road metal, and again in some grass while taking a smoko, the latter find yielding 13.5 ounces of gold.⁶⁰ Smith experienced no such luck.

In the dry season, drinking water was at a premium. Emmett once marched four kilometres to exploit a waterhole, which he found yellowed by washdirt, laundry and a dead bullock.⁶¹ Washdirt was often piled beside the prospector's tent awaiting the advent of rain, when it would be sifted through a cradle at a nearby gully.⁶² The Bendigo washing season, usually enjoyed at Sheepwash, Emu and Bullock Creeks, was

a lively time, as nearly all are abroad. The merry joke is heard, and the loud laugh mingles with the rattling of stones in the hopper, the grinding of cradles, and splashing of water.⁶³

The wet season also turned the dust to mud and introduced the biggest nuisance of all:

the flies, the little fly and the stinging monster March fly. O! the tortures these wretches give! In the hole, out of the hole, at meals or walking, it is all the same with these winged plagues. When washing at a waterhole, the March flies will settle upon the arms and face, and worry to that degree that I have known men pitch down their dishes, and stamp and growl with agony. The fleas, too, are not of the Tom Thumb order of creation, and they begin their blood-thirsty work when the flies are tired of their recreation.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Skelton Emmett junior to E T Emmett 18 June 1914, NS1010/1 (AOT)

⁶¹ *ibid*

⁶² Bonwick, *Notes of a Gold Digger*, p.13

⁶³ *ibid*, pp.14-15

⁶⁴ *ibid*, pp.24-5

Larger dangers necessitated safety in numbers. Tipperary Gully and the junction of Bendigo and Back Creeks was 'Irishtown'. The main German community was nearby at Kilfenora and Ironbark Gully. Long Gully was 'Little Cornwall', and names such as California Gully and American Flat recalled their own contingents.⁶⁵ Bonwick recalled a 'clan' of 'Derwenters of Tasmania', among them a stentorian spruiker who cried 'Ere's your Van Diemonian Happles, and them as don't like the country needn't buy 'em'.⁶⁶ The best-known 'Apple Isle' enclaves remained the convicts and ex-convicts, some of whom featured prominently in looting and armed robberies, punishment for which was sometimes summary execution. Smith recalled that at Ballarat there were three distinct 'Vandiemonian' fraternities, camped well away from the police, and who preyed upon lone diggers at night, threatening lives as well as livelihoods as they looted their tents.⁶⁷ One digger was tossed, somersaulting, 54 metres, down a shaft, another survived a 79-metre fall. Smith is believed to have carried a Perlot Brothers five-shot muzzle loading revolver to protect himself.⁶⁸ He seems to have needed it, as Smith's son Ronald recorded an incident that is not mentioned in his father's notes or correspondence:

I remember hearing my father tell me that he was once a member of a gold escort, when they were attacked, and in the fight one of the attackers was wounded by a gunshot in the neck. Later he saw a man with his neck bandaged that he thought he recognised as the man that was wounded.⁶⁹

Ronald also recalled one of the old men of the district telling him when he was a child that the Philosopher

was once attacked by a man with a long knife. In the struggle my father broke the blade of the knife. I never heard my father mention this.⁷⁰

Presumably this incident took place in Victoria, although the recollection is so vague that it may refer to an incident that took place at Forth in 1887, when Smith's local

⁶⁵ Cusack, *Bendigo: a History*, p.35

⁶⁶ Bonwick, *Notes of a Gold Digger*, pp.25-6

⁶⁷ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

⁶⁸ letters written by Ronald Smith 17 May 1958, no. 117; and 18 May 1958, no. 118, NS234/9/9 (AOT)

⁶⁹ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith', p.7

namesake James Smith (from the property called Mount Pleasant) charged two Chinamen with stabbing him in a public house,⁷¹ an institution Philosopher Smith would have visited only in the event of it hosting a public meeting. Nevertheless, it is certain that on the goldfields, among the flies, fleas, heat, sickness and exhaustion, the frustrations of the harassed and the unlucky, Smith experienced the flashpoint of physical violence.

Financial survival on the goldfields was precarious. There were 60,000 diggers at Bendigo in 1853.⁷² At this time more than 100,000 people were believed to be en route to the Victorian goldfields, an influx that Smith considered could only be sustained by resuming arable land from squatters' leaseholds. Living on the goldfields was prohibitively expensive for most, only beef and mutton reaching Bendigo at a reasonable price and potatoes being the one vegetable available. Smith cited his own case: five months of strenuous exertion earned him a deficit of £20, the cost of provisions exceeding the value of gold won. For many a digger, gold fever was distilled into a daily routine of sweat, mutton - cold, fried or boiled - and mud, guarding his claim, and scraping together enough specks in a bag to cover the digger's bugbear, the gold licence fee, that is, if he had a licence. A great many, Smith recalled, resented travelling across the world to see the results of their industry dissipated by an oppressive tax which brought none of the commensurate facilities such as roads, post offices and an efficient police force.⁷³ The bullying manner in which the licence fee was administered annoyed diggers almost as much as the fact of having to pay for it:

When as usual during the first three or four days of each month many persons went to the camp for licences they were peremptorily ordered

⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁷¹ *Examiner* 8 December 1887. Forth storekeeper A M Walker sometimes issued accounts to Smith in the name of 'J G Smith' (see, for example, James Smith accounts 25 February 1873, NS234/4/1, AOT), presumably to differentiate him from the other local James Smith, and not, as Ronald Smith suggests in 'Early Life of James Smith', (p.9), from any connection with Smith's mother's maiden name (Grant).

⁷² *Argus* 9 July 1853

⁷³ Bruce Kent, 'Agitators on the Victorian Gold Fields, 1851-4: an Interpretation', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 6, no. 23, November 1956, pp.270-1

'fall in' by a man in uniform and who was armed with a ramrod to remind
no doubt that firearms were available for immediate use at the camp...⁷⁴

These strong-arm tactics were only matched by the zealous prosecution of defaulters. A digger who had waited unsuccessfully for a licence on three different days was arrested as a defaulter and fined £5 immediately upon returning to his camp on the last occasion. Another man merely visiting friends on the diggings was likewise penalised. Non-licenceholders could expect to be dragged to the police camp and chained up overnight. Resentment manifested itself in the cry of 'Joe!' that accompanied every appearance of police at the diggings, enabling defaulters actual or otherwise (the licence had to be carried at all times and produced upon request) to hide themselves. Bendigo representatives who met Melbourne mayor J T Smith in August 1853 claimed that diggers were seized and convicted on the sworn statement of one policeman alone. One man was fined £10 simply for calling a policeman 'Joey'.⁷⁵ Many new chums, especially, Smith recalled, risked incarceration because they lacked the know-how to raise sufficient ore to pay for a licence. As alluvial gold grew scarce, so did its beneficiaries:

There was the more uneasiness among the diggers as to the future owing to the rate at which the alluvial gold washing worked. When a new lead or patch of rich ground was found it soon became 'rushed' and comparatively few were fortunate in securing rich claims while very many men obtained no more than a livelihood and a considerable number spent in the search for gold all the money they had while many were unsuccessful for weeks or months or altogether.⁷⁶

General discontent prompted the formation of the Anti-Gold-Licence Society at a meeting in July 1853. The demand for radical reform framed at this meeting condemned the 30-shilling impost, the difficulty of obtaining the licence, the high cost of living, the lack of land for settlement, the hardships experienced by new chums, the ill-feeling

⁷⁴ Smith notes, 'Gold Diggings of Victoria', NS234/14/7 (AOT)

⁷⁵ 'Grievances of the Gold-Diggers: Public Meeting', *Argus* 5 August 1853

⁷⁶ Smith notes, 'Gold Diggings of Victoria', NS234/14/7 (AOT)

aroused by the inspection of licences and the treatment of those deemed to be without licences.⁷⁷

It seems unlikely that, even though his father was Protestant Irish, Smith acknowledged Irish ancestry. In contrast to the anti-authoritarian Irish spirit in New South Wales, Emerald Isle emancipists were a powerless minority in Tasmania, which, along with its oppressive *Masters and Servants Act* (1856), accounts for the comparative passiveness of that colony's ex-convict contingent.⁷⁸ If anything, and in keeping with his denial of ex-convict descent, Smith, like his sister, became 'more British than the British'. The goldfields were a racial 'free-for-all', however, and the agitation that culminated on a hill near Ballarat was much more than an Irish rebellion.⁷⁹ There is no evidence that Smith's indignation about the gold licence was racially or class-based; rather, his anger was localised to the injustice done the diggers, reflecting a sense of fair play. Equally clear is his commitment to non-violence and lawful means of protest. That he occupied two positions in the Anti-Gold-Licence Society suggests that not only had he won the respect of his fellow diggers but that he felt a duty to them. His deputation to the diggers of Forest Creek, where he was to negotiate a considered and unified opposition to the tax, suggests that his leadership qualities were exercised and recognised.⁸⁰

Smith's aim in joining the society was to 'endeavour to counteract any tendency to extreme perturbation'. 'I belonged,' he wrote later, 'to the 'passive resistance' party.'⁸¹ He took part in the great anti-gold-licence march of August 1853, a preliminary protest to the violent battle at the Eureka Stockade in the following year.⁸² Geoffrey Serle lists the licence question, the conduct of police and the growing poverty of diggers as the major grievances which came to a head at Eureka, with exclusion from possession of

⁷⁷ Kent, 'Agitators on the Victorian Gold Fields, 1851-4', p.279

⁷⁸ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, Harvill Press, 1988, pp.593-4

⁷⁹ Geoffrey Serle, 'The Causes of Eureka', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 6, no. 23, November 1956, p.20

⁸⁰ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith', p.8, quotes the deputising letter, dated 24 August 1853, which is now missing from the Smith family file.

⁸¹ Smith to J H McCall 10 July 1882, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

⁸² Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

land and absence of political rights being lesser issues.⁸³ All these grievances obtained at Bendigo.

This experience must have developed Smith's negotiating skills. The expectations of an estimated 16,000 disenchanted diggers of various nationalities and persuasions rested upon the committee members' shoulders, the Chartist George Edward Thompson and the 'red republican' Captain John Harrison being among the representatives. The policy of passive resistance prevailed on that bleak, muddy Bendigo afternoon. Red ribbons aflutter, the marchers pressed forth to present a petition for reduction of the licence fee at the government camp on All Saints Hill. Smith's account of the march describes how precariously the peace was maintained:

Diggers and others came to the meeting from all directions. A large number walked in procession from one of the White Hills. The procession started from near the residence of Dr Jones, Chairman of the central committee but had not proceeded far when those at its head were requested by the secretary of the committee to halt. This they did the rest following the example all thinking that there must be good cause for the delay. Soon it transpired however that the secretary who had it seemed decided to act as a sort of master of ceremonies on the occasion was undesirous of proceeding farther without having in his hand what he termed his 'baton'. On this becoming known to one of the members of the central committee it was nearly leading a heated altercation between him and the secretary. The baton - a toy-like thing - was however soon forth coming [sic] and the procession resumed its march with rapidly increasing numbers the secretary walking at its side with as much ease of manner as if had long been accustomed to appear in public truncheon in hand. Some distance farther on a young man arrayed in a bright red shirt and cap and with bagpipes slung as if for playing was seen advancing from the direction of some tents near the side of the road. His object was clearly to place himself at the head of

⁸³ Serle, 'The Causes of Eureka', p.24

the procession but just as he was about to do so he was confronted by an elderly and rather powerful female by whom he had been followed and who saying you have no right, you have no right pushed him gently backwards several times. This treatment seemed to unnerve him and as an appealing look which he cast at the procession only excited unsympathetic laughter he seemed so far as the writer could see in passing utterly chagrined and quite powerless to evade the grandmotherly opposition he was experiencing. A few minutes later an elderly blue shirted man advanced and speaking in an under-tone to a young man, a recent arrival from England, and one of two who were carrying flags at the head of the procession said he hoped he would be calm under the fire he pretended to imply would soon be directed against the procession and that he himself, an old soldier, was used to it. The young man thinking no doubt that one believing himself to be so brave should be in a foremost position on the occasion and influenced perhaps by a momentary thought that there might be a collision between the diggers and the military and police at the camp handed the flag to the old soldier which flag the latter took and carried with apparent satisfaction....

There was another little episode at a point opposite the commissioner's camp. Four or five rough looking men armed with guns advanced from the side of a tent as if intending to join the procession but stepped back on encountering looks which was [sic] intended as repellent of any demonstration on the part of persons with firearms in their hands. The armed men however stationed themselves by the side of the road and forthwith fired their guns in the air and continued to fire in this way for a considerable time. As those firing and portion after portion of the very orderly procession passing near them were hidden by tents and the smoke of the guns from the view of most of those at a distance there arose a belief on the part of some that the firing was

being done by the procession with revolvers as a menace to the authorities.⁸⁴

The *Argus* claimed that the discharge of guns was 'mainly owing to the foolish opinions expressed by certain parties at the camp about what they could do with four troopers armed with whips.'⁸⁵ Fortunately, amid the rain and clouds of gunpowder neither side resorted to violence, although when a delegation stepped forward, the crowd surged toward the government camp in a manner which alarmed the object of this entreaty, Chief Commissioner Wright:

The Chief Commissioner who met the deputation in front of the camp tents was visibly agitated. He asked the meaning of the demonstration and in particular called attention to the manner in which the crowd was surging towards the camp. At this juncture two of the committee seeing that there appeared to be a disposition on the part of the crowd to follow two men in digger-like costume who had entered the camp enclosure requested the two men to retire lest the crowd influenced by their example should obtrude also. The two men drew back a short distance on being informed in reply to questions put by them that there was no apparent desire on the part of the authorities to imprison the deputation. The writer thinks, however, from the constrained manner of the two men on the occasion that they probably had for private reasons more sympathy with the authorities than with the diggers. Meantime the deputation was informed that instructions had not been received for the continued enforcement of the payment of gold licence tax.⁸⁶

Reform was slow and insufficient for the diggers' liking.⁸⁷

George Anderson also recorded impressions of digger unrest among the heat, flies and muddy toil. The Scotsman's recollections of the goldfields when he and Smith

⁸⁴ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT); for further description of the march see *Argus* 1 and 2 September 1853

⁸⁵ *Argus* 1 September 1853

⁸⁶ Smith notes, 'Gold Diggings of Victoria', NS234/14/7 (AOT)

re-established contact in 1861 were nonetheless a little nostalgic, and demonstrate the essential difference between Smith and many of his fellow diggers:

Yes, I well remember too my remarking that our digging days would be a theme on which we should become garrulous in our old age if spared to reach it. Those days were not all pleasure but I hold a few periods of our lives are more pleasing in the retrospect than those jolly times - then Hope at least told her flattering tale... I know nothing that would give me more pleasure than another campaign...⁸⁸

Like most of his contemporaries, Anderson was by this time prevented from embarking upon another campaign by family commitments. The Victorian goldfields, however, were only the beginning of Smith's lifelong prospecting campaign; he would still be searching for new fields in his last years.

Smith had several short stints in Victoria. His apparently modest success there and the predictions of the renowned geologist Reverend W B Clarke had only whetted his appetite for a local goldfield upon his return to Tasmania during 1852. Clarke had more than three decades of geological study behind him when in 1851 he accepted a request to conduct an examination of the likely gold-bearing districts of New South Wales. After nominating more than 100 gold sites in that colony, in June 1851 Clarke transferred his attention to Tasmania. He claimed the country west of Lake St Clair at the head of the King River, and along the western slopes of the dividing range from Mount Humboldt (Mount Field West) to Western Bluff, was deserving of a search for a profitable goldfield.⁸⁹ This probably prompted Smith's expedition to the west and south of Deloraine, as far as the upper reaches of the Mersey River, where the scrubby gorges would have provided the prospector with challenges unknown in Victoria.⁹⁰

Tasmanians who had served their rites of passage at the Victorian goldfields would form almost a sub-class of north-western society, such was the universality of the

⁸⁷ John A Feely, 'With the Argus to Eureka', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 6, no. 23, November 1956, pp.36-7; Kent, 'Agitators on the Victorian Gold Fields, 1851-4', pp.272-3

⁸⁸ George Anderson to Smith 9 September 1861, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁸⁹ 'Gold in Tasmania', *Examiner* 1 December 1853, p.106

⁹⁰ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

experience. Many old diggers, including Robert Quiggin, Henry Button, James Cowle, Joseph Raymond, B W 'Bat' Thomas and John Hair McCall, came to be associates of Smith. Some of them - E B E Walker, S B Emmett and George Anderson, for example - like him put their earnings toward a selection along that wild coast. Smith's return to Tasmania signalled that he had found something more than gold in Victoria. His life, his drive, now had a long-term focus.

Part II: Smith the Tasmanian Prospector

Chapter 3: Clarke's Gold: Testing his Theories

The pursuit of gold made globe-trotters of some Tasmanians. In 1861, a native of Hobart, Gabriel Read, made the first strike at Otago, New Zealand,¹ where George Renison Bell and Frank Long also cut their prospecting 'teeth'. William Robert (W R) Bell panned streams from Kiandra and Gippsland through Broken Hill to the west. Neither the high plains drifter nor, for that matter, the hick stockman who trips over a quartz reef on his run, however, represented the typical prospector - or, rather, the typical *successful* prospector. In a study of forty-two nineteenth-century Australian mining fields, Geoffrey Blainey found that thirty-four were discovered by men who were searching for minerals rather than by accident. 'The typical discoverers,' he wrote,

were not men who prospected year after year in virgin territory but men whose periods of prospecting followed spells as stockmen, pastoralists, farmers, shepherds, mining engineers, miners, labourers, or jacks-of-all-trades.²

Smith fits a little awkwardly into Blainey's model. He *did* prospect year after year in virgin (geological) territory but, on the other hand, the key to his prospecting expeditions was the financial security of property and his ability to raise cash by turning his hand to many additional labours, such as those outlined above. He was not the typical prospector. Although all his work during his dozen years as a regular prospector supported his expeditions and the development of his mining shows, Smith actually spent only 18 months of that period in the bush,³ circumstances perhaps governed equally by the seasons, his recuperation from his trips and the limits of his provisions

¹ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press (originally published 1963), p.81

² Geoffrey Blainey, 'A Theory of Mineral Discovery: Australia in the Nineteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, vol. 23, no. 2, August 1970, p.309

and money. For at least half the year the Tasmanian highlands were prohibitively cold and, more importantly, the streams were too high to permit panning of their wash or sinking a shaft to the bedrock in order to test indications of minerals.

While new chums such as Charles Rasp⁴ at Broken Hill and the McDonough brothers at Mount Lyell made their mark, some of Australia's most famous mineral discoverers were superbly equipped for success. Though only 27 years old when he discovered the Coolgardie goldfield, Arthur Bayley had already tasted success in the Northern Territory and at the Nichol and the Murchison River fields. He could, according to Geoffrey Blainey, 'almost smell gold'.⁵ Forty-nine-year-old Paddy Hannan had followed the gleam for 26 years from Victoria to New Zealand, Queensland, New South Wales, Tasmania and South Australia before hitting the jackpot at Kalgoorlie. J F Connelly, who sparked the Murchison goldfield in Western Australia, was a native of the Victorian gold town of Inglewood, and had served his time on the Kimberley and Pilbara goldfields.⁶ Such men had panned and scratched every mountain gully from coast to coast.

Smith was likewise equipped when he discovered Mount Bischoff - equipped to find minerals in *Tasmanian* conditions. Not for him the 'golden band across the world' that 'marks the miners' Odyssey'.⁷ After leaving Bendigo, Smith never prospected outside his native colony, as if, once he knew how to find gold, the first part of his quest was ended. Now all he had to do was find it in Tasmania, a personal fortune that would also serve to better his homeland.⁸ He was probably just more level-headed and more systematic than his fellow Tasmanian adventurers, the acquisition of a small sum in Victoria presenting an opportunity for financial security that the industrious young man with a Puritan property ethic and commitment to self-culture could not resist.⁹

³ Smith to Julian Thomas 23 August 1894, no. 260, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

⁴ A Coulls, 'Charles Rasp (1846-1907)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1976, p.9.

⁵ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.169

⁶ *ibid*, p.165

⁷ Clive Turnbull, *Australian Lives*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, p.129

⁸ See, for example, Thomas Hainsworth, 'James Smith', *Examiner* 4 June 1878; or Thomas Monds's speech 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877.

⁹ John Marlowe, *Puritan Tradition in English Life*, Cressnet Press, London, 1956, p.83

The 'north-west pioneer': establishing home base

The cessation of convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land and the advent of self-government ushered in what many islanders, 'tainted' or otherwise, hoped would be a new era. The Tasmania of the romantic visitor H Butler Stoney in 1853 was enterprising, energetic, virtuous and noble. Having 'manfully conquered'¹⁰ the drawbacks of penal settlement, it promised 'future greatness, and speedy advancement'.¹¹ European trade was thriving, Stoney reported, wages were high, land values rising, while Tasmanian society was 'as agreeable and cultivated...as can be found in the southern hemisphere'.¹² Hobarton's 'rising greatness' would lead it to 'rival any city in the south'; Launceston, busy with commerce, was also 'rising in wealth and importance'.¹³

In reality, the promise of independence had gone awry, bringing the colony new difficulties. Self-government was accompanied by political instability. The propertied classes jealously rejected land and income taxes made necessary by the cessation of transportation, which cost Tasmania not only cheap public works but the vast sum Britain provided for the custody and maintenance of her convicts. The 'stain' of convictism would haunt Tasmania decades beyond the end of transportation, when only 37% of Tasmanians were native born and 50% were ex-convicts.¹⁴ According to Hughes,

Economic stagnation condemned the island to live with its past; long after the rough developing energies of the mainland colonies had transcended the 'convict stain,' the Dr Jekyll of Tasmania remained paired with the sinister Mr Hyde of Van Diemen's Land. Convictry lived on in a hundred pervasive ways. It seemed rooted to the very landscape...¹⁵

¹⁰ H Butler Stoney, *A Residence in Tasmania*, London, 1856, p.20

¹¹ *ibid*, p.154

¹² *ibid*, p.152

¹³ *ibid*, pp.15, 12 and 235

¹⁴ Henry Reynolds, 'That Hated Stain': the Aftermath of Transportation in Tasmania', *Historical Studies*, vol. 14, no. 53, October 1969, p.19

¹⁵ Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, Harvill Press, London, 1988, p.589

Even as transportation of convicts ceased, the *Masters and Servants Act (1856)*, which allowed employees to incarcerate their hired hands for a week at will and without trial, enshrined the old oppression of emancipists by the freeborn.¹⁶

While small winnings at the gold rushes allowed many Tasmanians to seek independence as small farmers, they were often crippled financially soon after by economic depression (S B Emmett, for example, lost all his savings after establishing a farm at Forest, Circular Head, in 1856¹⁷). This was the immediate reality Smith faced when, in 1853, he joined the north-western Tasmanian land rush that greeted the issuing of the Pre-emptive Land Rights regulations. He did not inherit his father's Swan Bay property, as the Vagabond would later suggest;¹⁸ others claimed the abandoned 30-acre farm by 'adverse possession', that is, by occupation without title.¹⁹ Contesting ownership of the property, anyway, would have brought Smith painfully close to a denied past. The November 1851 regulations allowed him to select a much bigger slice - 640 acres (259 hectares) - of agricultural land, conditional upon paying 30 shillings per annum for every 100 acres selected for 10 years, after which the land was to be paid off at £1 per acre. Calculated to stem the flood of emigration to Victoria and to settle the 'waste lands', the regulations were liberal enough to allow speculators to rape the timbered backblocks and genuine settlers like Smith, if they were lucky, to keep their heads above water. Smith was in the minority: while 90,000 acres were taken up along the north-west coast under these regulations, in 1858 only 6,797 acres were in crop between Port Sorell and Cape Grim.²⁰ His intention in choosing land near the Forth River in then remote County Devon was to realise

a competence by farming and I intended if successful in this to enter upon a regular system of exploration in the colony.'²¹

¹⁶ *ibid*, p.593

¹⁷ S B Emmett memoir RS131/16 (Royal Society of Tasmania collection, University of Tasmania Archive)

¹⁸ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', Age 27 October 1894, p.11

¹⁹ David Medwin to Mary Jane Smith, 13 March 1907, no. 2299, NS234/5/6 (AOT)

²⁰ *Statistics of Tasmania*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1859; cited by H J W Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910: the Establishment of an Agricultural Community*, Ph D thesis, Australian National University, 1969, pp.5-6

²¹ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

Smith believed he was destined to make a mineral discovery that would benefit the colony.²² A goldfield as rich as that of Bendigo would surely have reversed the island's fortunes. His toe-hold in the giant hardwood forests which every settler had to clear to reveal the rich chocolate soil beneath offered almost limitless scope for the exorcism of gold fever. Across a few ribbons of highland track the unknown stretched to the Southern Ocean, the only land links between the north-west and Launceston being the hazardous, overgrown, unbridged Kentish²³ and Van Diemen's Land Company tracks. The north-west contained an abundance of coal, timber and arable land, resources capable of sustaining growth and industry if immigrants could be attracted from the colonies across the strait.

It took Smith six years to reach the stage at which he felt ready to prospect. This appears to have been a time of contemplation as well as toil. Solitary evenings in his bachelor cottage gave his study and his spiritual exploration ample rein, the *Bible* being his favourite text. (On a lighter note, he amused or comforted himself by playing the violin.)²⁴ Smith's first contributions to the Launceston *Examiner* newspaper, in 1858, coincided with his earliest regular written correspondence, suggesting that perhaps he was stimulated by communication with a kindred spirit. He was probably already known as the 'Philosopher'.²⁵

While working the Forth River banks its pioneer settler of 1840, James Fenton (Thomas Monds's brother-in-law), had watched the transportation era draw to a close and the struggle of Van Diemen's Land - Tasmania - to clear its name begin. Only a few months before Smith's arrival the Forth village had been bailed up by the bushrangers Dalton and Kelly, in, as some saw it, one of the last stands of convictism.²⁶ Assignment of convicts - bargain-priced labour, in effect - had ceased shortly before Fenton took up his land at the Forth, which, while a convict sympathiser, he saw as 'a great blow to the

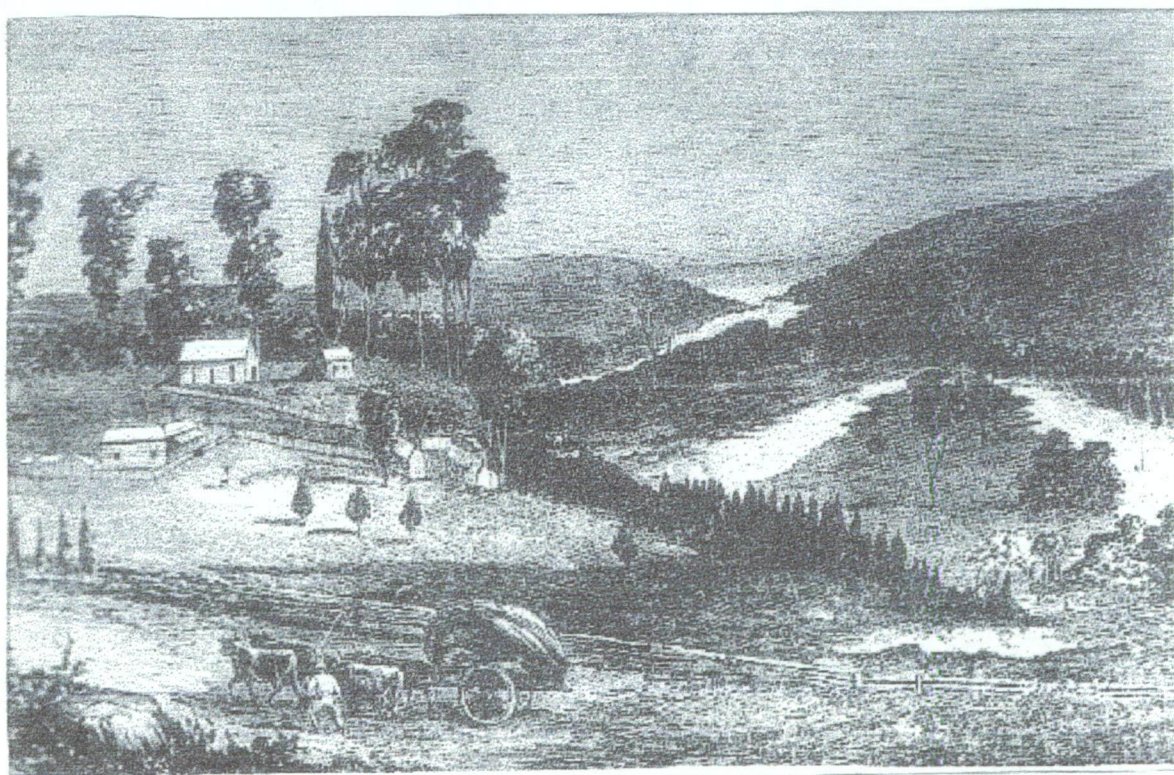
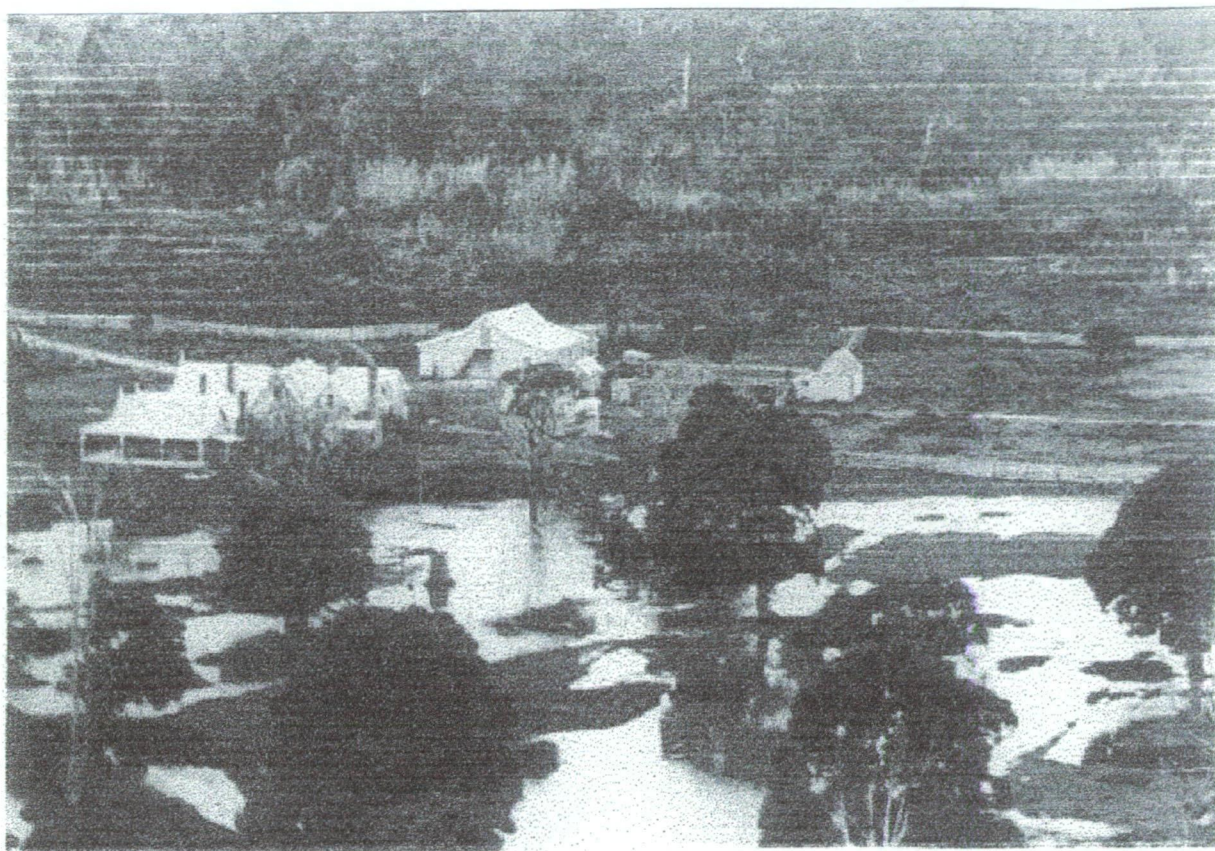
²² Walter Mathison to Smith 10 April 1883, NS234/3/12 (AOT)

²³ See L J Blake, 'Nathaniel Lipscomb Kentish (1797-1867)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 2, Melbourne University Press, 1967, pp.48-9.

²⁴ A B Crowther, *James Smith*, A3160 (Mitchell Library), p.3

²⁵ See Introduction.

²⁶ James Fenton, *Bush Life In Tasmania 50 Years Ago*, CL Richmond, 1964 (originally published 1891), pp.100-1. This book is the major source used for background material about the Forth settlement.



(Top) The Clayton Rivulet floods Smith's original block of land in 1903. On the left is Westwood house, built after Smith's death. In the centre is the then store and stables, which later formed the present Westwood house. The small shed on the right, used as a workshop in 1903, is possibly Smith's original two-room hut built in 1853. (Ronald Smith photo)

(Bottom) A rather exaggerated early James Fenton sketch of the Forth River estuary. The building in the background (left) is thought to be the Congregational Chapel, in the grounds of which Smith would be buried.

settlers everywhere, for it almost extinguished the chance of getting a living out of agriculture.'²⁷ Free men had downed tools in droves to join the gold rushes, leaving selectors like Fenton to seesaw the consequent Victorian market for food and building timber (In 1853 Tasmania exported timber to the value of £443,161, and in 1854 £306,857-worth, outstripping wool as its greatest earner.)²⁸ 'Poverty,' Fenton wrote, 'was inscribed upon the portals of almost every homestead in Devon.'²⁹

Potatoes and palings: that was the way of life. Paling splitters had been attacking the Forth forest for years. Settlers split the good timber, ringbarked the rest, scrubbed out the land and planted tubers, a crop that thrived in the chocolate soil and fed both man and beast. Fenton claimed to have been the first north-western settler to ringbark the forest, thereby introducing those familiar skeletal hillsides which glower out of even late nineteenth-century photographs.³⁰ The expense of this transformation was prohibitive, James Sprent reporting an estimate that clearing the land in that district cost £50 per acre.³¹ According to Stokes, district surveyor James Dooley estimated that over the first four years it would cost the settler £355 to clear and crop (with wheat seed) 20 acres.³² While Smith waited for the ringbarked forest giants to topple, he also tried growing wheat, despite its appeal to the abundant possums and wallabies and the threat of rust. The example of the pioneering Van Diemen's Land Company, whose stock had dissipated in the snow, mud and thylacine predations of the north-west, must have cautioned settlers about grazing.³³ Some undated and probably unpublished lines in Smith's notes celebrate the harsh lifestyle of the time:

'The North-West Pioneer'

Some boast of farming they have done

On land they found all clear

Or with but just enough of trees

²⁷ James Fenton, *Bush Life*, p.45

²⁸ *Statistical Summary for Tasmania 1878*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1878

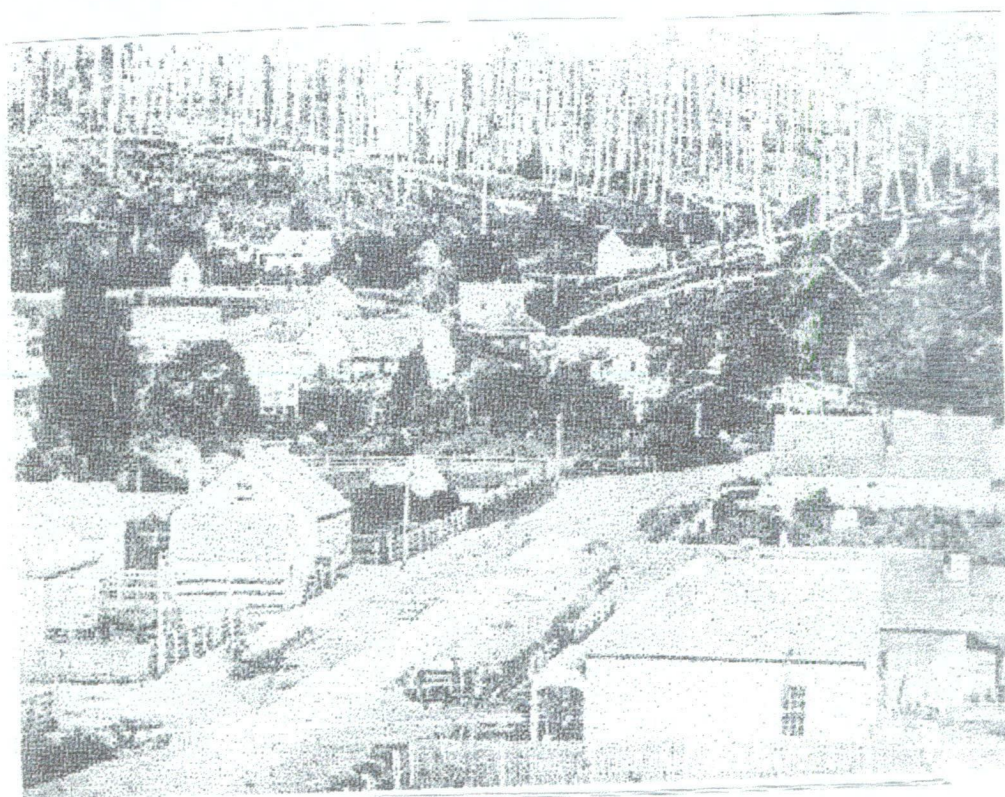
²⁹ James Fenton, *Bush Life*, p.156

³⁰ *ibid*, p.53

³¹ cited in Stoney, *A Residence in Tasmania*, p.249

³² Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.49

³³ See C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, pp.39-112.



(Top) Clearing the forest: a north-west pioneer stacks a mountain of logs, hauling them away by horse-team. (Bottom) Skeletal forest giants haunt the hills above the township of Forth.

For useful purpose there,
But for reclaiming virgin soil
From forest dense and drear
Who is there could e'er surpass
The North-West Pioneer

This Pioneer must sow and plant
As best he can each year
Where roots of trees obstruct the plough
In land 'tis said is 'clear'
Though all around him sap-ringed trees
Their huge proportions rear
Or falling sorely hamper him
The North-West Pioneer

His is an independent life
So seems this Pioneer
Nor flags his courage though on him
The strain is oft severe
As, zealous in progression's van
He is a volunteer
And worthy is of the name
Of North-West Pioneer

Forth. J S³⁴

This poem is actually new lyrics to the popular song 'British Grenadier'.³⁵ Smith saw himself and other coastal settlers as British pioneers displaying all the pluck and industriousness of the 'British lion'.

³⁴ Smith notes in NS234/14/7 (AOT)

³⁵ Thanks to Michael Bennett.

Isolation - the only trade route was Bass Strait - intensified the pioneer's struggle. As there were no roads, nor bridges, between coastal settlements (a *Public Works Loan Act* was not passed to provide these until 1865³⁶) it was easier to bring salted meat across the sea than to get fresh meat locally. Constables had been appointed to the Forth, but the nearest doctor was 25 kilometres away. In 1854 Smith had to fetch a doctor from Port Sorell to aid a man who had cut his own throat at the Forth six days earlier, a delay caused by the assistant police magistrate's refusal to send the police boat from the Mersey to the man's aid. Smith was outraged by this behaviour:

Now is not such conduct as this in a Police Magistrate preposterous. Could not the Police boat which is at the Mersey only eight miles distant from this place have been sent to convey Mr Cook to Port Sorell, where Dr Lone was in almost daily attendance. It must be obvious that the [assistant] magistrate could have supplied him with medical aid had he be [sic] inclined to do so.

And what would have been poor Cook's fate had the people amongst whom he was set at liberty been as uncompassionate as his liberator most probably [sic] he would have perished in the bush...If Mr Nicholls [the assistant police magistrate] had done his duty in this affair he fulfilled an office which is a disgrace to the government if he has not he has disgraced himself and his office and merits the censure of the community at large.³⁷

The medical situation was slightly improved in the same year by the arrival of 'Dr' E B E Walker, a 'good Samaritan' reputed to have had medical training, at the western side of the Leven. His longest 'mercy dash' would be a 240-kilometre return bush-bash to Middlesex Plains to re-break and set a stockman's injured thighbone.³⁸

³⁶ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.58

³⁷ Smith letter dated 29 July 1854, NS234/14/1 (AOT). This diatribe, apparently intended for a newspaper, was not printed. See also James Fenton, 'Captain Cook', *Examiner* 27 July 1854.

³⁸ E B E Walker to Smith 8 July 1875, no. 319, NS234/3/4 (AOT)

By 1858 Tasmania was in the grip of a depression caused by a slump in the agricultural and pastoral industries, the mainland exodus of the colony's vigorous male youth (the gold rushes had given Tasmania negative migration) and the consequent scarcity of and rise in the cost of labour, and Victoria's protectionist policy.³⁹ Disease and rabbits depleted wool production; trade dropped; wages and prices depleted living standards.⁴⁰

The closest market was Launceston, about 40 kilometres away by sea. Smith had accounts there with merchants who exchanged produce for essential supplies - barrels of sweet pork, sugar, tea, coffee, butter, castor oil, salt, flour, farming equipment - and a few extras, such as chocolate, currants, raisins and mustard. (Porridge, rice, pork and apples appear to have been the mainstays of his diet, presumably supplemented by the produce of his own garden and, eventually, of his orchard.⁴¹) Other supplies - oatmeal, mutton, paper, postage stamps, even shirts and trousers - were obtained at Walkers' store at the Forth, and he subscribed to both Launceston newspapers, the *Cornwall Chronicle* and the *Examiner*.⁴² Scraping a living from the loose change was not helped by Smith's evident half-heartedness with this produce and with business practices in general: John Rattray dismissed one load of wheat as 'perfect rubbish',⁴³ while Thomas Monds, his boyhood chum, found a shipment of that volatile commodity, palings, 'very inferior'.⁴⁴

Delivery was hazardous. It was just a dozen years since the first cargo of potatoes grown in west Devon and shipped from the Forth foundered entering the Tamar Heads. Three hundred palings disappeared from one Smith shipment to Launceston, eliminating his profit.⁴⁵ The price dropped while another load was in transit. An order of grass seed brought the selector even less satisfaction - he was forced to hold the wolves at bay with

³⁹ W A Townsley, 'Tasmania and the Great Economic Depression, 1858-1872', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 4, no. 2, July 1955, p.39

⁴⁰ W A Townsley, *Tasmania: From Colony to Statehood: 1803-1945*, St David's Park, Hobart, 1991, pp.99-100

⁴¹ Smith accounts NS234/4/1 (AOT)

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ John Rattray to Smith 15 April 1856, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁴ Thomas Monds to Smith 19 June 1856, no. 24, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁵ Thomas Monds to Smith 3 November 1856, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

a payment of half a cheese!⁴⁶ Smith must have had his 'rose-coloured glasses' on when he recalled that the depreciation in produce made his farming a 'partial failure'.⁴⁷ In December 1859 the situation was so bad that Rattray advised Smith to sell up:

The sooner you wind up the better for I cannot see that you are likely to better your own condition or do any good to those to whom you are indebted by cultivation...⁴⁸

Smith's decision instead to stay on the 140 acres of 'good [cleared] land', and sell his remaining 500 acres of bush land to fund prospecting, probably represents a watershed in his life: from hereon, minerals ruled his destiny. His struggle would ease as trade opened up along the coast and he diversified into mixed farming. By 1861 he was growing cucumbers, pumpkins and marrows as well as potatoes. He also reared chickens and rabbits.⁴⁹ The success of his orchard in a bend of Claytons Rivulet suggests that he had particularly 'green fingers'.⁵⁰

Smith's spiritual welfare, at least, was in hand. Congregationalists were extraordinarily active along the north-west coast. The Colonial Missionary Society's Reverend Walter Mathison established four chapels in the district before any other denomination got a look-in.⁵¹ The influx of settlers to the Forth was due in part to the 'word-painting' skills of Congregationalist Reverend Benjamin Drake who, after being appointed to the Forth Mission church, returned to England and by preaching about a worker's paradise conscripted two shiploads of labourers for his congregation.⁵² The Colonial Missionary Society also had a hold in another local immigration scheme, the Mersey coalfield. One of the experienced miners recruited from the old country to work this field was Thomas Hainsworth, a 22-year-old old Batley Yorkshireman who could

⁴⁶ Thomas Monds to Smith 18 January 1857, no. 38, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁷ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁴⁸ John Rattray to Smith 29 December 1859, no. 85, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁹ C B M Fenton to Smith 25 August 1861, no. 18, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁵⁰ In 'Apple Blight', *Examiner* 3 January 1861, p.4, Smith reports his technique of washing blight off apple trees.

⁵¹ James Fenton, *Bush Life*, p.133

⁵² *ibid*, p.131

have illustrated Drake's emigratory proselytism: 'Became of him! Why he has a thriving school and his health is sound as a bell!'⁵³

Hainsworth's youth reads like a chapter from D H Lawrence - underground at nine, consumptive, barely educated, dragging himself up by the bootstraps until, before the age of 20, he wrote and delivered an address to his fellow colliers.⁵⁴ When the Mersey coalfield failed, he became the tempestuous spirit of education in the north-west. A tenacious scribbler who appeared to regard newspaper columns as advertisements for debating partners, he suffered from fearful injuries both physical and mental, most of the latter being self-inflicted, and from having more children than pounds to feed them with. An avid reader of Hugh Miller, Hainsworth had found his 'old red sandstone' in the Carboniferous fossils of the Mersey coalfields and taken W B Clarke as his remote instructor. Miller's death in 1857 moved the young Yorkshireman to praise his importance to the Christian as well as the lover of science; how he had tried to lead working-men 'from the degrading influence of the tap-room to the more ennobling and elevating influence of thought and science'.⁵⁵ In later life Hainsworth's own lecture on 'self-culture' would be delivered to the next generation of Batley colliers and other workingmen.⁵⁶

Hainsworth would become Smith's closest and lifelong friend, the foil for his studies and his ambitions. Their exchange of ideas stimulated the process of self-development at a time and place when its adherents were few and far between. They had much in common, both being largely self-educated, liberal-minded Congregationalists with an insatiable thirst for enlightenment. It was characteristic of their eclectic correspondence that snakebite rather than mining was their introduction. In a letter to the editor of the *Examiner*, Smith described a method he had devised of squeezing snake poison out of the limbs of dogs he had caused to be bitten.⁵⁷ In reply, Hainsworth revealed that he had

⁵³ *ibid*

⁵⁴ 'Obituary: Mr Thomas Hainsworth', *Examiner* 17 January 1896, p.5

⁵⁵ Thomas Hainsworth, 'Hugh Miller', *Examiner* 11 April 1857, p.3

⁵⁶ *Devon Herald* 12 June 1885

⁵⁷ James Smith, 'Simple Cure for Snake-Bites', *Examiner* 20 November 1858, p.2

long thought that this principle instantly acted upon would prove effectual, but I had always entertained a dislike to try experiments. If my dog, or cat, or child, or self should ever be bitten accidentally...I mean to try the experiment.⁵⁸

He disagreed with Smith's description of the reptile's biting apparatus, citing Sir Richard Owen as his authority, but Smith maintained his position. The writing style is typical of Smith, modest but ponderous. Presumably, punctuation was added by the editor:

To many it may seem highly presumptuous for an obscure, self-taught individual like myself to place his assertions on a very important point of animated nature in juxtaposition with those of gentlemen from some of the deepest fountains of learning that exist amongst the most enlightened people on earth, although such knowledge is not always without a tincture of error and prejudice, as the question at issue will prove, unless it turns out that the poison teeth of the snake of the antipodes differ wonderfully from those of the snake in Tasmania.⁵⁹

The mutual respect evident in this exchange is unusual for a Hainsworth debate, contrasting sharply with a sarcastic anonymous exchange he conducted simultaneously in the same columns over the nature of the Mersey coal. The reader can sense the satisfaction of like minds recognising each other. In suggesting private correspondence on snakebite, Hainsworth closed:

Sincerity is stamped on every sentence Mr Smith writes. Truth seems to be his object, as well as the good of his fellow man...we can console ourselves in our quiet labours with the thought that we are philanthropists working for the good of our fellow men.⁶⁰

The snakebite debate had a theatrical sequel when in March 1860 the travelling medicine show of the so-called 'Snake Charmer', Joseph Shires, visited north-west Tasmania. Wrangling his collected snakes, Smith sacrificed two chickens, a dog, a cat and a goanna to the test of Shires' snake-bite vaccine, which at the Forth performance

⁵⁸ Thomas Hainsworth, 'Snake Bites', *Examiner* 27 November 1858, p.2

⁵⁹ James Smith, 'Snake Bites', *Examiner* 7 December 1858, p.2

was ultimately pronounced a success. Hainsworth remained uncommitted after Shires' show at the Mersey.⁶¹ In the mean time, a friendship had been cemented. Although Smith's letters to Hainsworth from this period are lost, the other's letters hint at Smith's replies. Hainsworth regarded them as brothers

mentally self taught teaching and caring more for the improvement of the mind - the noblest faculty with which God has blessed the human soul than for riches or honours - or any of the sensual indulgences and pleasures which many spend useless lives in pursuing.

He saw their friendship as an opportunity for mental improvement, noting that in Tasmania its disciples were 'like angels [sic] visits - 'few and far between'.⁶² For a working man, a friendship of this kind was a chance to exchange not just ideas, but books themselves, filling in the gaps that the 'self-educator' inevitably faced. 'The self-made reader,' according to Vincent,

was as great a myth as the self-made millionaire. No matter how deprived or remote the community, it always seemed possible to find a neighbour or a fellow workman who was known to be a lover of books.⁶³

Their subject portfolio ranged from religion, moral duty, education and literature to geology and physiognomy. While Hainsworth decided that people with mismatched eyebrows and hair were untrustworthy,⁶⁴ Smith explored the other 'science' of the human head, phrenology, going so far in an undated letter as to christen a bump of his own lying between those denoting ideality and caution. This, he believed, was charity. 'Does it not seem possible,' Smith wrote,

⁶⁰ Thomas Hainsworth, 'Snake Bites', *Examiner* 14 December 1858, p.3

⁶¹ James Fenton, 'Important Discovery - Snake Antidote', *Examiner* 18 February 1860, p.5; 'Town Talk and Table Talk', *Cornwall Chronicle* 10 March 1860; 'Joseph Shires and His Antidote for Snake Bites', *Cornwall Chronicle* 24 March 1860; and James Fenton, 'Shires's Snake Antidote', *Examiner* 29 March 1860, p.3

⁶² Hainsworth to Smith 17 December 1858, no. 60, NS234/3/1 (AOT). This is Hainsworth's introductory letter to Smith after their snakebite debate, but has been mistakenly filed in 1863.

⁶³ David Vincent, 'Miller's Improvement: a Classic Tale of Self-Advancement?', in (ed. Michael Shortland), *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p.235

⁶⁴ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith, 15 August 1869, no. 96, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

that a wise and magnificent Creator when forming the human head and endowing it with faculties should give the sentiment a distinct organ and does it not seem absolutely necessary that such a faculty should exist to assist benevolence in counter-acting the selfishness of Acquisitiveness Love [sic] of Approbation and self esteem.⁶⁵

Self-denial and discipline figured strongly in both men's lives. One of Hainsworth's first actions upon arriving in the colony in 1854 was to build himself a desk in order to encourage development of a writing habit. Covered higgledy-piggledy with papers, the desk and his dinner table were so placed that at any time he could take up the pen and write out his thoughts without rearranging anything. He demanded a similar focus from his correspondent:

When writing to me do not try to be anything but yourself. For the sake of improvement in writing and composition try to write your best - but do not try to write anything you do not feel and do not exaggerate anything you do feel. Be yourself. Write yourself out on paper - the thoughts that pass through your mind - the feelings that exist in your own breast. Above all, send me no waste paper - either fill it or cut it off that it may be ready at any time for a stray thought that would otherwise fly away and be no more thought of but for being caught [sic] and chained down at once.⁶⁶

The influence of Hugh Miller is more evident in Hainsworth than in Smith. To many self-educated labourers struggling to come to terms with complex geological theories, Miller's popular style was a guiding light. Hainsworth's descriptions of local geology bear a little of Miller's personal tone and, similarly, utilise lines of verse.⁶⁷ Like Miller, Hainsworth frequently wrote himself out on paper. Impatience oozed from the pages. Thieves - sleep, visitors, indolence, procrastination - on every side disarmed his

⁶⁵ Smith notes, 'Phrenology', NS234/14/6 (AOT)

⁶⁶ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 25 January 1859, no. 61, NS234/3/1 (AOT). See the poem 'Let Me Be Candid' (*Examiner* 26 February 1859), which may be Smith's reply to Hainsworth's letter.

⁶⁷ for example, 'A Ride from Table Cape to Emu Bay', *Examiner* 11 July 1868, p.3; and 'Wynyard, and a Ride on a Truck', *Examiner* 10 October 1868, pp.2 and 3

fight for bread and knowledge. He admired boldness, strength and originality in writers such as Milton, Byron, Burns, Shelley, Emerson and Carlyle, despite any other contrary traits these men possessed.⁶⁸ He saw the same tendency in his predilection for geology, the science which had, at this time, just before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* took root, most challenged fundamentalist Christian theology. Hainsworth regarded boldness as a visceral response to the world rather than a want of goodness, and he was reminded of the hymns he had enjoyed as a child and now found in Wesley's hymn book, including one written by Cowper:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform
He plants his footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm...

Hainsworth also rode upon the storm. One wild night he found his mirror in nature. Power and majesty, he confessed, were more attractive to him than mildness and placidness. Javelins of lightning and crashing thunder made him exultant:

I feel serene and joyous - I feel as though I would fly away and mix with the battling elements. I feel more pleasure - deep genuine pleasure when gazing on the sea in a storm than in a calm - when the vessel is rocked to and fro like a play-thing - and the masts creak and the sailors shout aloft - and the waves dash their white foam over the bulwarks and every particle of water seems combined with consciousness. I like the rugged rocky coast better than the low land and long sandy beach - the towering precipice than the smooth lawn - the sterile mountain peak covered with eternal snow better than the grassy plain...⁶⁹

Smith was calmer, more reasoning and more retiring. They accepted small differences of opinion as inevitable in the exercise of a mutually beneficial relationship, their goal

⁶⁸ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 12 February 1859, no. 63, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁶⁹ *ibid*

being self-improvement, as a draft of a Smith letter to Hainsworth demonstrates.⁷⁰ The subject was a letter Hainsworth had submitted to *Examiner* editor Henry Button attacking another's views on teetotalism. Smith wished that Hainsworth had used

mild persuasive arguments without directly attacking the opinion of others unless you have been provoked to do so in order to show the inconsistency of any argument that might be advanced against yours.⁷¹

In response, Hainsworth was unequivocal:

I beg to say that I differ from every word you write excepting the last sentence which I transcribe for your benefit that there may be no mistake. The sentence I refer to is 'I remain your sincere friend James Smith.'⁷²

Hainsworth was to Smith as the consumptive young house-painter William Ross was to Hugh Miller:

We used to beat over all manner of subjects together...and though we often differed, our differences served only to knit us the more.⁷³

While Hainsworth lectured, establishing the Devon Institute in 1859 (to advance 'the intellectual, moral and material interests of the District around it'⁷⁴) and regular teetotal meetings, Smith's means of public edification was anonymous verse. Hainsworth preferred prose. Both had the ear of another Congregationalist, Henry Button, editor of the *Examiner* newspaper, in which Smith's efforts often rested alongside Hainsworth's, effusions that both presumably hoped did good service to their fellow man.

Hainsworth probably introduced Smith to the American Transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson, mentioned above. It is less likely that at this time Smith was familiar with Emerson's now more famous colleague Henry Thoreau, but Thoreau's slightly earlier retreat at Walden Pond invites comparison with Smith's solo existence in the

⁷⁰ for example, Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 25 January 1859, no. 61; and 13 November 1860, no. 100, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁷¹ Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT)

⁷² Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 13 November 1860, no. 100, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁷³ Hugh Miller, *My Schools and Schoolmasters: the Story of My Education*, 14th edn., William P Nimmo, Edinburgh, 1869 (originally published 1840), p.161; Vincent, 'Miller's Improvement', p.235

⁷⁴ *Examiner* 5 July 1859, p.2

north-western forest. Smith presumably began building his hut after ordering an axe, an adze, shingle nails, ordinary nails, a hammer, hooks and files from a Launceston ironmonger, William Hart, in September 1853.⁷⁵ His home would have been a slab hut hewn from local timber, with a shingle roof. Thoreau pondered the 'pleasure of construction':

who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands
and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly
enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds
universally sing when they are so engaged?⁷⁶

Smith's poetry during the years he developed his farm was no bird whistle, although it appears to have given full rein to his beliefs. The idea of following a moral course according to God's design, and the triumph of the individual, the heroic achiever, are central themes. Kindness and support among Christian brothers is advocated;⁷⁷ Smith's commentaries about the fight for freedom in Europe⁷⁸ confirm that he was well-read and politically aware. He was not an elegant writer, sometimes being let down by clumsy rhyme, metre and expression. His sombre tone suits the didacticism of some of his verse ('Hope On' or 'Spurn Each Selfish, Base Design', for example); from 1867 to 1870 he published under the appropriate pseudonym of Ernest James.⁷⁹ Other poems, such as 'Hail Tasmania' and 'Annexation: Perish the Thought', express the idea that national progress is the sum of individual industry, of perseverance and labour, and that cultivators of the land and discoverers of mines have a part to play in the rise of the colony.⁸⁰ Smith revered heroic achievers such as George Washington,⁸¹ Sir John

⁷⁵ Smith accounts NS234/4/1 (AOT)

⁷⁶ Henry Thoreau, 'Walden', *The Portable Thoreau* (ed. Carl Bode), Penguin, New York, 1987, p.300

⁷⁷ 'Let Me Be Candid', *Examiner* 26 February 1859; 'Christian Love', *Examiner* 29 August 1861; 'Friendship', *Examiner* 19 December 1861

⁷⁸ 'Dembsinski and Poland', *Examiner* 11 May 1858; 'On the Aggression of Austria Against Piedmont in 1859', *Examiner* 9 June 1864

⁷⁹ *Examiner* 22 January 1859, p.2 and 2 May 1863 respectively. In 1910, after Smith's death, his wife Mary Jane received a letter from a Smithton (Tasmania) man named Ernest James (30 April 1910, no. 2601, NS234/5/6 [AOT]).

⁸⁰ *Examiner* 31 July 1869 and 31 October 1867 respectively

⁸¹ John Nottage to Smith, 20 November 1880, no. 438, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

Franklin,⁸² David Livingstone⁸³ and Livingstone's famous pursuer, Henry Stanley.⁸⁴ At a tea meeting at Don in 1868, Smith, described as a geologist,

in his excellent address gave a short sketch of General Washington,
and dwelt on other interesting topics highly instructive to the young as
well as those more advanced in life.⁸⁵

At one point during this address, silver tumbled from Smith's pockets - although whether it was silver ore extracted from the ground, or coins, is unclear. The poem 'Franklin', written soon after the discovery that Franklin's party had perished in northern Canada, eulogises the bold explorer and celebrates the wifely devotion that sent out the search party:

His soul is now exalted with the bless'd
His mortal life was closed in regions where
He won most of the honours he in life pos-
sessed ;
And lasting records fitly shall declare
How well he merited the spotless fame
That shall for ever spread its halo round his
name....

They strove to ope [sic] the way for enterprise ;
Their country planned the work they went
to do,
Disasters thickly came 'midst snow and ice ;
They struggled to escape all this we know....

⁸² See Kathleen Fitzpatrick, 'Sir John Franklin (1786-1847) and Lady Jane Franklin (1791-1875)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.411-2.

⁸³ 'Livingstone', *Examiner* 4 November 1863

⁸⁴ Smith to Robert Quiggin, 8 February 1892, no. 586, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁸⁵ 'River Don', *Cornwall Chronicle* 15 January 1868

We all should emulate the deeds of her
 Whose soul was nerved by pure devotion's
 zeal,
 Whose quenchless hope, amidst repelled
 despair,
 Its pure and tender beauty did reveal
 For him she loved so well that soul by whom
 Her love was cherished till it spread devo-
 tion's bloom.⁸⁶

In later years, Smith would be compared to both Livingstone and Stanley. Intriguingly, the African missionary explorer Livingstone may have read some of Smith's poetry, including, conceivably, Smith's dedication to him. After reading Livingstone's *Missionary Travels*, published in 1857, Henry Button began mailing copies of the *Examiner* to him in Africa. Livingstone eventually replied that 'He was very grateful for this small expression of sympathy, and gave an interesting sketch of his experience and achievements...'⁸⁷

As a man who had risen from humble beginnings to a position of Christian benevolence as a missionary in darkest Africa, the prodigious Livingstone in particular represents a model to whom a man of Smith's leanings would be expected to aspire. The similarities between Livingstone's life and Smith's are sufficient to suggest that Smith, only fourteen years younger, may have seen him as a role model. Well-meaning Smith contemporaries, who knew of his turbulent childhood but not of his ex-convict parentage, would have assumed that he, like the Scot, was the product of 'humble but respectable' parents,⁸⁸ and certainly Smith had 'born [sic] and conquered the cruel circumstances of his boyhood...'⁸⁹

⁸⁶ 'Franklin', *Examiner* 21 January 1860

⁸⁷ Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania*, A W Birchall and Sons, Launceston, 1909, p.93

⁸⁸ J S Robertson, *The Life of David Livingstone, L L D, the Great Missionary*, Murdoch and Co Ltd, London, 1882, p.7

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p.11

As a mill worker, labouring fourteen hours per day with a book balanced before his eyes on the spinning jenny, the pre-adolescent Livingstone had crammed two hours of school and two more of private study into his exhausting daily regime, which ended at midnight. Even then, according to Robertson, 'it was often necessary for his mother to take possession of his books and send the youthful student to bed.'⁹⁰ Stanley reports that by the age of ten the boy was earning enough money to support his family and buy books - on travel, science, natural history and medicine - which 'served not only to lighten tedious hours at the spinning jenny, but to fit him for the career for which he was destined.'⁹¹ Botany, homeopathy and geology were early passions: young Livingstone had collected medicinal herbs, 'rambled for rare flowers and geological specimens' and, like Hugh Miller, had studied the fossils in the wall of a quarry.⁹² At nineteen Livingstone was promoted to a cotton spinner, a wage that put him through university in Glasgow. Like Smith also, Livingstone had joined the Congregational Church.

When Livingstone reached present-day Botswana as a medical missionary in 1841, more than seven decades of 'heroic' European penetration of Africa, by the likes of his fellow Scots John Leyden, Mungo Park, Hugh Clapperton and John Campbell, whose accounts he would have read, lay behind him. Significantly, Livingstone was not just a missionary, but a 'missionary explorer'. Hence, according to Robertson,

his discoveries and adventures would attract the attention of the entire intelligent community, not only in his country, but throughout the civilised world, and result in a service rendered to the savage people of Africa which the united labours of half a hundred missionaries could not accomplish.⁹³

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.14

⁹¹ Henry M Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures and Discoveries in Central Africa*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1890 (originally published 1872), p.ix

⁹² Judith Listowel, *The Other Livingstone*, Julian Friedman, Lewes, United Kingdom, 1974, p.5; David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels in South Africa*, new edn., John Murray, London, 1899 (originally published 1857), pp.4-5

⁹³ Robertson, *The Life of David Livingstone*, p.36

Among several Smith poems which describe apocalyptic struggle between good and evil, 'The Slave Ship's Doom' shows that he was attuned to Livingstone's missionary theme:

When Britons quell in open flight
The iron hand of wrongful might,
Their bosoms thrill with joy and pride ;
But when they catch upon the tide
 The hounds
That live on human flesh and blood,
Their joy as ocean's endless flood
 Abounds.⁹⁴

Other poems, such as 'Disappointment', in which heavenly love conquers disappointment in earthly love, probably reflect Smith's personal struggles, particularly his failed romance with Mary Ann Spence.⁹⁵ Perhaps he was lovelorn. 'The Tattered Rose on a Maiden's Grave' possibly laments the fate of this former lover who, although not dead in 1859 as the poem suggests, had perhaps, in his eyes, been morally destroyed:

I knew young Mary well ;
 When fair in girlhood's bloom,
She shone a rustic belle
 Whose soul could naught assume....
For want and illness came,
 And envy hurled his dart
Against her spotless fame,
 And pierced her tender heart....⁹⁶

Smith's solitary existence had already moved his old chum Thomas Monds to verse. In 1854 that young merchant wrote:

⁹⁴ 'The Slave Ship's Doom', *Examiner* 27 January 1859, p.3

⁹⁵ *Examiner* 1 February 1862

⁹⁶ *Examiner* 22 January 1859, p.3

'A Fragment'

Oh happy childhood, all thy days are past;
And the troubles of man increase, as rolls the sun
On his diurnal course ; too bright to last,
Thy days, O innocence ; and manhood
finds us half undone;
For who can tell how hard it is for one
Safe o'er the troubled sea of life to steer,
Relying solely on himself to shun
The paths of vice, no kindred spirit near;
Alone, without a friend, his drooping
soul to cheer?⁹⁷

In 1903 Monds explained that the poem was

not the experience of the writer, who, through life has had many friends
and relatives to cheer him on his way along the rugged road, but was
written while thinking of a fellow apprentice [a footnote names Smith],
who had no such friends, and who in his onward and upward course
through life was all alone. Nevertheless he has fought the battle well.⁹⁸

This is a slight exaggeration: Smith had several close relationships.⁹⁹ For all his battles,
though, Smith's ultimate hopes rested in another realm. His spiritual outpourings
suggest that he drew great strength from his faith:

And if our hopes are earthly,
They cannot be secure;
And like earth's fragile flowers,
They will not long endure.
But if our hopes are holy
They'll bloom in Heaven's light,

⁹⁷ T W Monds, *Domestic and Other Pieces*, Launceston, A J Pasmore, 1903, p.10

⁹⁸ *ibid*

⁹⁹ Constant, 'Philosopher' Smith', *Cornwall Chronicle*, 3 September 1873

And lastingly will flourish,

Enchanting pure and bright.¹⁰⁰

Elena Grainger, in her study of W B Clarke, reveals his hitherto unknown financial straits. Quoting Jane Austen's remark that 'a very narrow income has a tendency to contract the mind and sour the temper', she attributes Clarke's irascibility, defensiveness and argumentativeness to poverty.¹⁰¹ While there is nothing to suggest a similar development in Smith's personality, the question remains: What was the effect of financial stringency upon him? Smith's 'limited means' are documented, but he was probably no poorer than many of his neighbours. Unlike many north-western farmers, he avoided the Insolvent Court. Smith, after all, had no dependents. He probably accepted limited financial means, and perhaps bachelorhood as well, as consequences of his quest for achievement. Growing up poor had probably inured him to the simple life. He seems to have accepted that his life was in God's hands, as he would later write to Hainsworth, 'I...believe that if temporal prosperity is delayed it is because it is best that it should be delayed.'¹⁰²

Lack of opportunity or desire, influenced, perhaps, by parental desertion and his guardian's example, could also explain Smith's bachelorhood in these early years at the Forth. His two-room slab hut, one room of which was taken up by a large fireplace, was not intended as a conjugal home.¹⁰³ In 1859 Hainsworth's suggestion that Smith marry provoked an argument with him about 'man's natural state',¹⁰⁴ and he teased Smith about a 'Mrs Smith in prospect'.¹⁰⁵ One of the principal tenets of 'self-culture', according to Samuel Smiles, was that a man perfects himself by work more than by study - by life rather than literature.¹⁰⁶ It is reasonable to wonder if Smith viewed marriage as an

¹⁰⁰ 'Earthly Hopes', *Examiner* 29 October 1861. See also 'The Sabbath Bell', *Examiner* 5 February 1859, p.5.

¹⁰¹ Elena Grainger, *The Remarkable Reverend Clarke: the Life and Times of the Father of Australian Geology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982, p.12

¹⁰² Smith to Thomas Hainsworth 17 August 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

¹⁰³ Edward Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies: Letters to India from North-West Tasmania* (ed. Scott Bennett), Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1980, letter VIII (June 1878), p.27

¹⁰⁴ Hainsworth to Smith 27 February 1859, no. 64, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

¹⁰⁵ Hainsworth to Smith, undated letter probably from March 1859, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

¹⁰⁶ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1986 (originally published 1859), p.22

obstacle to his planned 'work', his systematic prospecting. Smith's idea of a prospecting trip probably held the rigours of Thoreau's 'walk':

We should go forth...in the spirit of undying adventure, never to return, prepared to send back our embalmed hearts only as relics to our desolate kingdoms. If you are ready to leave...[family]...and friends, and never see them again - if you have paid your debts, and made your will, and settled all your affairs, and are a free man - then you are ready for a walk.¹⁰⁷

Family duties constrained Hainsworth's 'work' (or philosophical 'walk') to strokes of the pen, teaching and lectures around the Mersey and Forth settlements. Long prospecting tours would have been out of the question for him. For Smith, by contrast, they were an existential duty: he is reputed to have declared that he would prospect until 'death or victory should settle the question.'¹⁰⁸

The Forth River 'goldfield'

Pages of the *Bulletin* blackening since the days of Gallipoli wallpaper over the cracks in a crumbling gold miners' residence high on the spine of Black Bluff. On the Lea River below it, an ore trolley, rusted lantern and sacks of gelignite still anticipate the enlargement of adits blown into a pink conglomerate cliff by W M Black, who lowered his age and life expectancy in order to answer the call of the Light Horse brigade in the days when you could have still smelled the ink on that wallpaper.¹⁰⁹ Near the Vale of Belvoir, a channel that in places could swallow small shipping commandeers the issue of the Leven River for the head of the Mackintosh, on the opposite side of their common

¹⁰⁷ Thoreau, 'Walking', *The Portable Thoreau*, p.593

¹⁰⁸ Smith probably spoke these words to the Reverend William Law. They featured in the speech written by the Smith Testimonial Committee and spoken by Governor Weld ('Discovery of Tin in Tasmania: Presentation to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 9 December 1878).

¹⁰⁹ Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, p.100

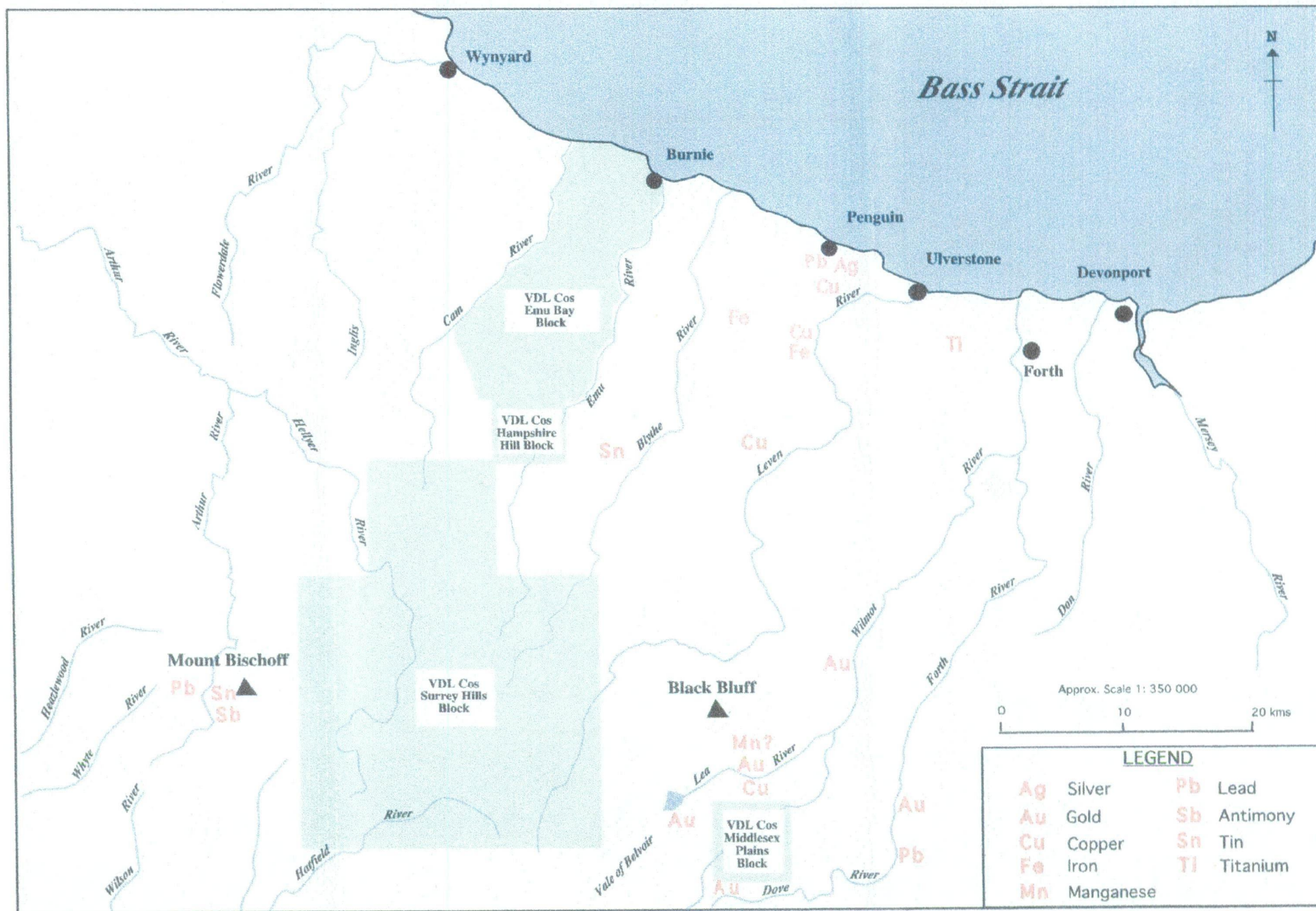


Fig. 3 - Location of James Smith's mineral finds

watershed, where it blasted gold-speckled drift. Further east, four sturdy bolts detain the memory of a 15-head stamper battery that was the pulse of the Middlesex 'goldfield'. It took 36 bullocks and a block and tackle more than a month to haul it four kilometres up out of the Forth River gorge, and a visiting mining expert a dozen words to send it back again.¹¹⁰

The path that was beaten to these small by-products of Smith's gold prospecting in the upper Forth has scarred the brow of the Black Bluff Range. Animal scats bely the apparent lifelessness of the windswept moor it crosses, on which every shrub is bowed and almost every knoll feeds Bass Strait or the Southern Ocean. Snow and sleet frequently blur the landscape but, as if to compensate the traveller, Cradle Mountain and Barn Bluff form towering landmarks on the southern skyline. Many a time Smith must have squelched his way though the buttongrass (*Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*) and cushion plants (*Dracophyllum minimum*) here, the rich fragrance of the lemonthyme (*Boronia citriodora*) blasting into his face,¹¹¹ south to the Middlesex Plains and Cradle Mountain or, by braving the Van Diemen's Land Company track, south-east to the Forth River and south-west into the Surrey Hills. No horizontal scrub tested his balance or blocked his passage here.

Appropriately, following Smith's own career, the two beacons of what eventually became known as the Middlesex and Mount Claude mining field were not gold mines. At their peak, the Shepherd and Murphy tin, wolfram and bismuth mine, at present-day Moina, and the Mount Claude silver-lead operation, were both steady producers. After the mainland silver boom, the latter mine and the mountain it bored ore from were renamed in solidarity with the Round Hill, sister of the original Broken Hill, which was one of the stars on that glittering field.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ The mines described are the Devonport, Thomas's Reward or Black's, Mayday, and Great Caledonian gold mines respectively. See Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, pp. 57-67 and 100-02, or Tasmanian Department of Mines reports, especially W H Twelvetrees, *The Middlesex and Mount Claude Mining Field*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 14, Hobart, 1913; and A McIntosh Reid, *The Mining Fields of Moina, Mt Claude, and Lorinna*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 29, Hobart, 1919.

¹¹¹ J S (James Smith) 'The Black Bluff', *Examiner* 3 June 1862, p.5

¹¹² Roy Bridges, *From Silver to Steel: the Romance of the Broken Hill Proprietary*, George Robertson and Company, Melbourne, 1920, p.38. This threw out Henry Hellyer's original nomenclature of the Mount Roland range, in that the names Mount

All these fits and starts of Tasmania's mining boom years form the eastern end of the Mount Read Volcanic Arc. While most important mining regions are the result of one geological 'event', Tasmania owes the richness of its western mining province, according to Large,¹¹³ to a 'double concentration effect' of metals in the earth's crust. Volcanic eruptions about 550 million years ago in the Cambrian period prompted the development of the 220-kilometre-long arc, extending from Elliott Bay on the south-west coast through Queenstown and around the northern flank of Mount Roland. This embraces the copper, lead, zinc, silver and gold ore deposits of Mount Lyell, Rosebery, Hercules, Que River and Hellyer. Large scale granite intrusions about 340 million years ago in the Devonian period resulted in the tin and tungsten deposits at Renison Bell, Cleveland, Mount Bischoff and King Island. In addition, a zone of perhaps 700-million-year-old metamorphic rocks known as the Arthur Lineament has provided deposits such as the iron ore at Savage River and gold at Corinna.¹¹⁴

In the early 1850s these events and their economic consequences were unknown. So far as European settlers were concerned, the island's west was an uninhabitable wasteland. The prison on its edge at Macquarie Harbour had long since been abandoned. Piners working upstream from Port Davey, on the Gordon River system and occasionally elsewhere were virtually the only intruders upon this formidable wilderness, not even W B Clarke's predictions prompting many to tackle it.¹¹⁵ James Smith had not ventured beyond the Great Western Tiers.

The claim that in the nineteenth century 'the first condition for mineral discovery was accessibility'¹¹⁶ applies to Tasmania just as it does to mainland Australia. The island differed in one respect, however. While the sheep pastures of Victoria and New South Wales revealed fabulous gold reefs, in Tasmania very little precious metal lay within the grasp of the shepherd or boundary rider. Although the first gold find of any

Claude and Mount Vandyke were shifted further east. See Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, pp.25, 26 and 41.

¹¹³ Ross T Large, 'The Mineral Wealth of Western Tasmania and the Potential of the South West Conservation Area', Tasmanian Chamber of Mines, Hobart, 1987, pp.1-2

¹¹⁴ *ibid*

¹¹⁵ See Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country*, Greenhouse, Richmond, Victoria, 1985.

¹¹⁶ Blainey, 'A Theory of Mineral Discovery', p.300

size or permanence was made in the pastoral district of Fingal in 1852 (by a shepherd, Keeling Richardson),¹¹⁷ an area which remained the focus of gold exploration throughout that decade, most of Tasmania's true riches were guarded by the mountains, gorges and scrub of the Mount Read Volcanic Arc, and there they remained buried for two decades after the mainland gold rushes, waiting for the shepherds to swap their crooks for machetes.¹¹⁸ Even then most of Tasmania's great mineral deposits, such as the Mount Lyell copper and the zinc of Rosebery lacked the large oxidised zone which could be cheaply and easily exploited. They were, as Geoffrey Blainey has put it, 'cake without the icing': their riches were locked beneath the ground, awaiting the coming of the capitalist and refined extraction techniques.¹¹⁹

While James Smith was finally setting out for the bush in the autumn of 1859, Charles Gould was sailing for the colony to undertake the first professional search. W B Clarke had extended his target area to the 146th parallel, 'especially on the streams and rivers running to the north...'¹²⁰ Parliament, more anxious than ever to secure Tasmania's Ballarat or Bendigo, passed the *Gold Fields Regulation Act* (1859). A £5,000 government reward had been all but ratified, the matter eventually lapsing in September 1859 over the difficulty of defining a 'payable' goldfield.¹²¹ Hopes that Gould, however, a new arrival in the antipodes, would be Tasmania's economic saviour after a few short weeks (even with local assistance) in the bush were very naive. Most rich strikes during the colony's mining boom would be made by long-persevering prospectors, grub-staked if they were lucky, bushmen of years standing.

Like much of W B Clarke's target area, the upper Forth River was geologically untested, although the itinerant geologist Count Paul Strzelecki had prospected along the Van Diemen's Land Company track which forded the Forth in 1842, and Joseph Milligan, that company's surgeon, had probably done likewise. Smith was eager to put his Victorian experience to account in trying this wild region which legend had endowed

¹¹⁷ Glyn Roberts, *The Role of Government in the Development of the Tasmanian Metal Mining Industry: 1803-1883*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 1999, p.18

¹¹⁸ Blainey, *The Rush that Never Ended*, p.6

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p.207

¹²⁰ *Cornwall Chronicle* 29 June 1859, p.4

with a stupendous, petrifying waterfall.¹²² His interest was stimulated by the claim of a local farmer, James Jones, that he and the district surveyor James Dooley had found indications of gold on the upper Forth while searching for pine timber in 1857. Smith recalled:

I told him [Jones] that I thought they had let an opportunity pass that they might have turned to great advantage, that eminent geologists had stated that a large tract of country through a great portion of which the upper part of the Forth flows, would prove to be auriferous, that the Reverend W B Clarke, who had predicted the discovery of gold at every place in N S Wales and Victoria where it had been found in large quantities had given it as his opinion that a rich gold field would be found in the same direction.¹²³

Being petrified proved to be the least of the hazards of the upper Forth system. It was here that Smith learned the ground rules of prospecting the Tasmanian north-west. Battling the conditions left no time to prove a lode by washing dirt through a cradle or sluicibox, let alone sinking a shaft to the bedrock. Boots were cut to pieces, clothes shredded. Diggings flooded overnight. Survival in the bush could rest on so simple a matter as keeping one's Lucifer matches dry when fording a stream. Smith learned what the old highland stockmen knew well: rising in a flash, the river could drown you or starve you. Those whose idea of gold mining was gathering nuggets like mushrooms on a sheep-run must have been sorely disappointed.

The wilderness began where Kentish's old track crossed the prospectors' path a few kilometres south of the Forth settlement. It was punctuated about 30 kilometres further south by Middlesex station, a staging-post on the Van Diemen's Land Company's 'Western Road' which was now grazed by a few hundred of the Field brothers' notoriously wilful cattle. The frightful ravines and thick forests of the intervening country had repelled its European surveyors Henry Hellyer, Joseph Fossey and Nathaniel

¹²¹ Roberts, *The Role of Government*, p.35

¹²² The waterfall legend began with Henry Hellyer, 'A Description of the Forth's Gateway', *Ross's Almanack*, 1832. The fall described by Hellyer is actually on Machinery Creek, a tributary of the Forth. See Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, pp.40-2.

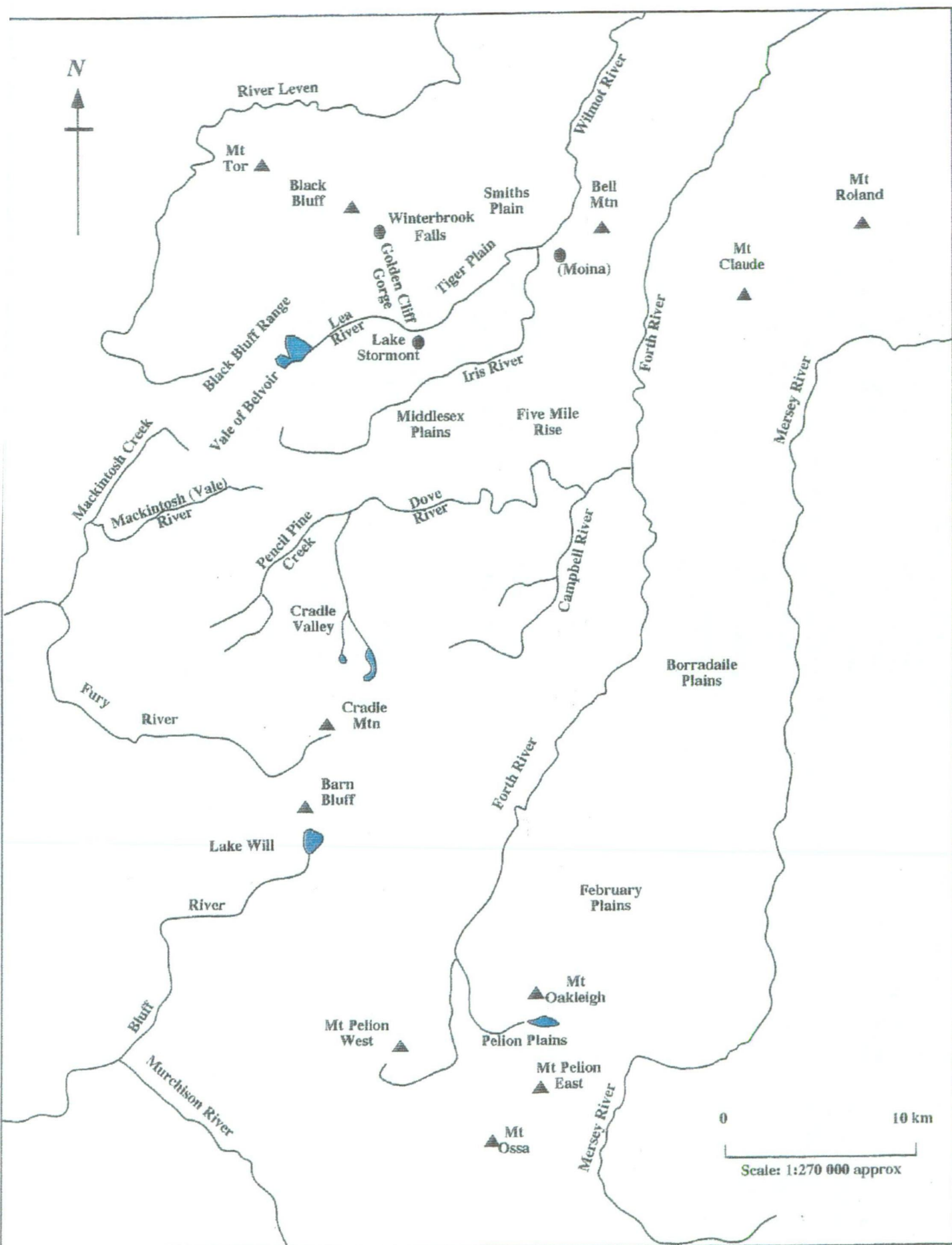


Fig. 4 Forth River High Country

Kentish, the only mirage being Fossey's landlocked pastoral idyll, the Vale of Belvoir.¹²⁴ Struggling along the Wilmot River with little more than tin dishes and other crude implements, Smith, Jeremiah Johnson and Jones returned from the Forth's major tributary with a few small pieces of gold. Smith's first Tasmanian mineral discovery, probably near present-day South Nietta, was registered in the name of all three men.¹²⁵ A more exciting find soon followed. Arriving at the upper Forth (no mean feat in itself), Smith dug a hole in the rocks on a sandbar three or four kilometres north of the Van Diemen's Land Company track ford. A panful of sand from the hole sparkled with coarse-grained 'pinheads' of gold.¹²⁶

When his previous companions declined to brave the winter, Smith recruited from the Mersey, including the coalminers Thomas Johnson and Zephaniah Williams,¹²⁷ the Welsh Chartist exile, in order to further test the Forth River sand. The third trip typified the physical obstacles facing the pioneer prospector.¹²⁸ Eight days and most of their provisions were sacrificed to a journey up river that can now be accomplished in an hour by car. While three men washed flaky gold in tin dishes, the other pair failed to shore up the tucker situation by landing a kangaroo - bringing the mining to a close after a few hours. Still, never in his days on the Victorian goldfields had the Philosopher obtained so much gold so easily, and he suggested that a payable goldfield existed between Gads Hill and the northern slopes of the Great Western Tiers.¹²⁹

This was enough to send a tremor of excitement though the poverty-stricken north-west. Public meetings at Leith and Ballahoo (Latrobe) despatched new prospectors and track-cutters to the hastily-crowned Golden Point.¹³⁰ District surveyor James Dooley cut a track from Clerkes Plains (Preston) to Smiths Plain, at the base of

¹²³ 'The Discovery of Gold at the Forth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 6 August 1859

¹²⁴ See Binks, *Explorers*, p.78; Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, pp.27-8

¹²⁵ Smith to Mersey police constable Thomas Clarkson, undated note, NS234/14/7 (AOT). For Smith's account of the journey, see 'Gold', *Examiner* 28 April 1859, p.3.

¹²⁶ 'Gold at the Forth', *Examiner* 12 May 1859, p.2

¹²⁷ See David Martin Jones, 'Zephaniah Williams and the Welsh Diaspora', *Island*, 82, Autumn 2000, pp.108-22.

¹²⁸ 'Gold on the Wilmot', *Examiner* 2 July 1859, p.2; 'Mersey River', *Cornwall Chronicle* 6 July 1859

¹²⁹ 'Gold on the Wilmot', *Examiner* 2 July 1859, p.2

¹³⁰ 'Public Meeting - River Forth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 20 July 1859; and 'River Mersey', *Examiner* 19 July 1859, p.3

the Black Bluff Range. Devon Road Trust surveyor William Dawson's track threaded through the western end of the Mount Roland range to Gads Hill. The *Cornwall Chronicle* speculated about soaring property values.¹³¹ Hopes of winning the unsettled £5,000 reward caused James Jones to try to usurp Smith as discoverer, the latter dismissing Jones's claim as 'a tissue of the grossest falsehoods'.¹³² (Ironically, Smith's ultimate find would attract retrospective usurpers.¹³³) The distant Reverend Clarke nodded approvingly and set St Valentines Peak as his new bullseye.¹³⁴

Smith's entry into prospecting in 1859 had been delayed by poor health.¹³⁵ After the third trip, he lay at home so ill from exposure in the bush that his friend James Fenton feared for his life. Recognising that illness was a financial hazard to a man of Smith's means, Torquay magistrate James Macarthur made probably the earliest appeal for a public demonstration of gratitude for Smith's efforts. Careful not to cast him as the object of charity, Macarthur asked the colonial secretary to give Smith a small sum of money which 'as a mark of approval will infuse a warmth of feeling that will considerably influence the otherwise fatal progress of discovery'.¹³⁶

None was forthcoming, and winter choked the progress of discovery. In November and December 1859 Smith ranged further west (as far as Mount Tor¹³⁷) and south (to Cradle Mountain¹³⁸) than before, probably in response to W B Clarke's pronouncement about the St Valentines Peak area. Smith's plan to prospect the entire length of the Wilmot River system was defeated on the first occasion by an unenergetic companion and on the second by worn boots and lack of provisions. 'If gold exists in paying quantities on the Wilmot,' Smith predicted, 'it is on the unexplored part'.¹³⁹ The only place from which Smith obtained more than a speck of gold was Golden Point, although

¹³¹ 'Gold at the Forth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 25 June 1859

¹³² See Jones's letters *Cornwall Chronicle* 9 July 1859, p.3 and 27 July 1859; and Smith's letters *Cornwall Chronicle* 16 July 1859 and 6 August 1859.

¹³³ 'The Story of Bischoff: the World's Greatest Tin Mine: How it Was Discovered', *Advocate*, 24 April 1923, p.4; and B Weeks, 'Pioneering Times: Heart Ache and Heart Break - the Experiences of My Grandfather, Henry Weeks', *Kentish Times*, April 1984, p.2

¹³⁴ James Macarthur to Smith 3 July 1859 no 73, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

¹³⁵ 'The Discovery of Gold at the Forth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 6 August 1859

¹³⁶ James Macarthur to colonial secretary 12 July 1859, CSD 1/136, no. 4999 (AOT)

¹³⁷ James Smith, 'River Forth', *Examiner* 10 December 1859, p.3

¹³⁸ James Smith, 'Mr Smith's Exploration', *Examiner* 31 December 1859, p.3

he did find what he regarded as promising quartz reefs in the Vale of Belvoir. The stone in these appeared to the eye to be gold-bearing, but no gold was found when tests were conducted in Sydney many years later.¹⁴⁰

The only sop to Smith and his far-north-western equivalent S B Emmett was that within a few months Gould's quest for gold in the central west spawned a north-western mission. Ronald Gunn's¹⁴¹ traipse between the Arthur and the Forth, like Gould's from the Eldon Range to Middlesex Plains,¹⁴² proved almost nothing. Unlike Gould, Gunn examined sites of reported gold discoveries, by Peter Lette, Smith and others - hurriedly, as the conditions necessitated. Such an inspection of Golden Point led him to dismiss it, as he had most of the others:

As the banks of the river are exceedingly precipitous for very many mile[s] it seems to me impossible that any alluvial diggings can exist in that locality. Gold in the rocks has not been found.¹⁴³

Gunn hired prospectors to further test the site, but they were farcically inept, as Smith discovered when he interviewed their leader:

on asking him where he had been, and how he had succeeded, he said that he had been sinking holes at a place where he had found a quartz reef several miles below Golden Point...because he had seen it before, and didn't like the looks of it at all....I told him he was labouring under a mistake; that if he had been there he must have seen the flat that extends from Golden Point for a considerable distance up the river, - to which he replied - 'Ah, well I couldn't go there through one of my mates quarrelled with me about it, for it was too much to carry provisions over the big hill.'¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ *ibid*

¹⁴⁰ See 6 May 1873, no. 150, and 5 September 1873, no. 256, NS234/3/2 (AOT).

¹⁴¹ See T E Burns and J R Skemp, 'Ronald Campbell Gunn (1808-81)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.492-3.

¹⁴² 'A Report of the Exploration of the Western Country by Mr Gould', Parliamentary Paper 6/1860

¹⁴³ 'Exploration of North-Western Country: Mr R C Gunn's Report', Parliamentary Paper 14/1860

¹⁴⁴ James Smith, 'Gold At the Forth', *Examiner* 23 February 1860, p.3

Smith believed quartz reefs *would* be found under Gads Hill, and 'put his money where his mouth was' by selling his 'right' to 500 acres of his 640-acre property for £200 to fund further exploration.¹⁴⁵ This was not the last time he would sell property to fund mining work. He was later backed (albeit without visiting the site) by W B Clarke, who likened samples from the Forth he had seen to Victorian gold. Gold-bearing reefs, Clarke predicted, would be found along the Forth River as far south as the Middlesex Plains.¹⁴⁶ When Clarke met Smith at the Mersey in April 1860 he asked the prospector to send him geological specimens from the areas he was examining. This led to more frustration, as Smith later explained to Clarke:

And I anxious to have your invaluable opinions and any guidance as well as to comply with your request collected a number of specimens with the view to forwarding them to you. I therefore wrote twice requesting you to suggest how I might send them but received no answer.¹⁴⁷

Gunn's assessment of Golden Point was just about the last straw for a man already stung by public fickleness.¹⁴⁸ Another exhausting expedition to the Forth headwaters had been greeted with disappointment that Smith had obtained 'only a speck or two', moving him to berate the bystanders:

What do such people expect from a single man? Do they think he is able to make a puddling tub of a concave plate and put a few millions of tons of drift through the regular washing process and then find the gold somewhere on the bed rock, or that he can turn the course of the rivers and pick up the gold dust from the bed at his leisure?¹⁴⁹

Of the few contemporary prospectors, perhaps S B Emmett bore the closest likeness to Smith. Emmett, who lived at Forest, Circular Head, explored and prospected the country south of there for about four decades, washing gold on many occasions on

¹⁴⁵ James Smith, 'Forth Goldfields', *Examiner* 14 February 1860, p.2

¹⁴⁶ *Cornwall Chronicle* 21 April 1860

¹⁴⁷ Smith to W B Clarke May 1869, 'Drafts of Letters', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹⁴⁸ For Smith's response to Gunn see 'Forth Gold Fields', *Examiner* 14 February 1860, p.2.

¹⁴⁹ James Smith, 'River Forth', *Examiner* 10 December 1859, p.3

the 'Hellyer' (Arthur) River and eventually establishing a tin field at Balfour. The similarities between their careers are remarkable. Both prospected casually in Tasmania before gaining a serious appetite for gold at the Victorian rushes. Almost simultaneously they took up the search for gold in Tasmania according to the predictions of Reverend W B Clarke, their early finds being dismissed by Gunn. Emmett was dogmatic about the existence of a payable goldfield on the Arthur River system; more so even than Smith was about the upper Forth. Both were constantly frustrated by want of public and government support for their efforts.

The main difference between them, aside from Smith's ultimate success, was his absolute commitment to the task. That he owned property speaks for his planning and resourcefulness. Emmett owned a farm also, but he was a lackadaisical farmer (in 1862 he went bankrupt¹⁵⁰) and an enthusiastic rather than methodical prospector. Smith was prepared to bank on his ability. When he applied to prospect Van Diemen's Land Company lands, he sought rations but not wages, believing that he should be remunerated only in the event that he found something valuable.¹⁵¹ If he failed to do so, the employer would therefore have lost nothing. Emmett, on the other hand, required wages as well as provisions.¹⁵²

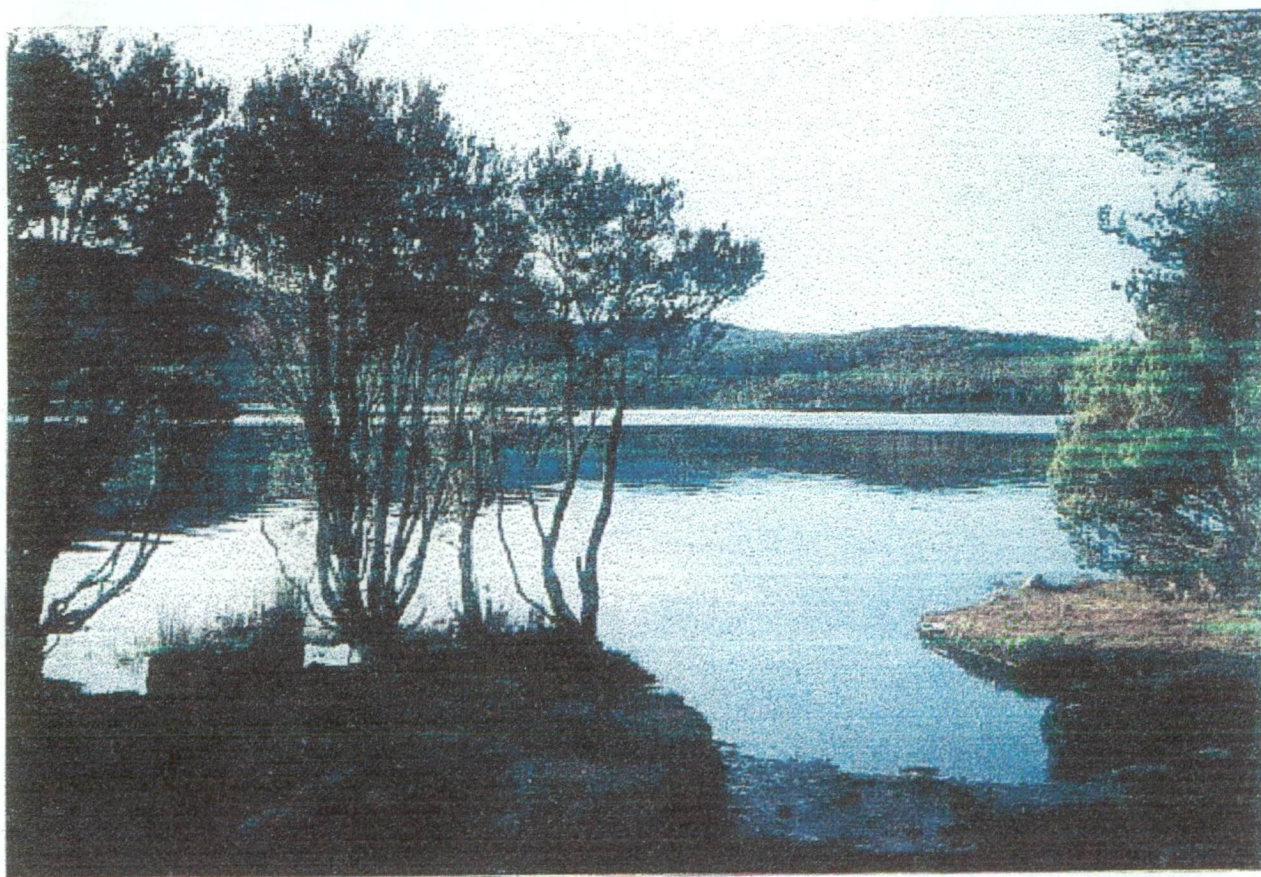
Their reputations were entirely different. While some probably regarded Smith as a dreamer, Emmett actually was one. Smith did not normally bruit discoveries before they were properly explored or exaggerate his finds in hope of attracting finance. He would become renowned for his endurance and perseverance, whereas Emmett, according to Van Diemen's Land Company agent J W Norton Smith, had the reputation of 'never having done anything thoroughly.'¹⁵³ For Norton Smith the choice between the two men, the most prominent north-western prospectors, was clear:

Philosopher Smith is the only man I would advise the company to
employ, he would go where no other man has been, the Victorians only

¹⁵⁰ See also S B Emmett to Smith 29 May 1876, NS234/3/5 (AOT).

¹⁵¹ Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company chairman 24 February 1872, VDL24 (AOT); J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD40, 10 July 1872, VDL47/1 (AOT)

¹⁵² S B Emmett to J W Norton Smith 28 April 1873, VDL24 (AOT)



Joseph Fossey's highland pastoral idyll, the Vale of Belvoir, in friendly summer garb. (Top) The Vale (Mackintosh) River snakes away through the southern end of the Vale on its course to the Indian Ocean. (Bottom) Lake Lea, at the northern end of the Vale. Smith found gold in the Vale of Belvoir during his 1859 expeditions.

go where everybody had been...[Smith's] heart and soul [are] given to the work.¹⁵⁴

Smith's later companion W R Bell was either not quite as single-minded as he or not as lucky. Over the 1861/62 prospecting season Bell and Leopold von Bibra, perhaps inspired by Smith's finds on the Forth, tested the Mersey, Forth, Leven, Mackintosh, Pieman and Arthur River systems, returning with a sample of gold from the Arthur.¹⁵⁵ Bell would come to know the north-western backwoods perhaps as well as Smith did, but his only finds of note were achieved in 1885 (the Heazlewood silver-lead mine) and 1890 (the Magnet silver-lead mine), when his prospecting career was a quarter of a century old. Had he reaped the benefit of the rich Magnet lode early in his career, perhaps Bell would not have needed to spend years working known goldfields and opening up small mines around Mount Bischoff. Smith dedicated himself to discovery.

'I would like to see you the owner of a farm or some houses, in addition to mining interests with a sufficient income for your maintenance,' Smith wrote to his protege George Renison Bell in 1876, encouraging him to emulate him even further.¹⁵⁶ Bell, the first discoverer of payable tin in north-eastern Tasmania in 1874, had just announced that he was following Smith in being a 'tin man' and a 'husband man'.¹⁵⁷ The two unrelated Bells are closer to Blainey's model of the typical discoverer. The bachelor W R Bell worked as a miner and a farmhand between prospecting expeditions; having received no timely reward for his tin discovery, family man G R Bell briefly went into business in Launceston, and later managed and worked several mines in Tasmania and on the mainland before and after he made his great discovery at Renison Bell. Both men owned property at some stage of their careers, but neither appears to have used it as a financial support to their mining activities the way Smith did: the land Smith sold to fund his prospecting would be returned with interest.

¹⁵³ J W Norton Smith to VDL Company Court of Directors, OD42, 4 September 1872, VDL47/1 (AOT)

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵⁵ 'Black Sand', *Examiner* 13 September 1862, p.5; 'Black Sand', *Examiner* 18 September 1862, p.5; 'Black Sand from the Hellyer', *Examiner* 30 September 1862, p.5

¹⁵⁶ Smith to George Renison Bell 8 July 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

¹⁵⁷ George Renison Bell to Smith 6 July 1876, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

Smith's speculation about gold being found on the part of the Wilmot he had not reached¹⁵⁸ was borne out by the short-lived Bell Mount rushes of 1893. Time would reveal a number of other small gold deposits gathered near the 146th parallel at Middlesex, the terminus of Gunn and Gould's expeditions: in many places on the Five Mile Rise (the hill on the Van Diemen's Land Company track west of the Forth River), on the Lea River system, and on Narrawa and Mayday Creeks.¹⁵⁹ The Campbell's Reward gold mine would operate with limited success near Golden Point (now under Lake Cethana) in the late 1880s and early 1890s.

Smith is remembered as the founder of the vigorous Middlesex and Mount Claude mining field that opened up on the strength of additional deposits of tin, wolfram, bismuth, silver-lead, copper and molybdenum, plus an efficient transport system, before and after the Great War. This field was to Smith what the Mersey coalfield was to Hainsworth or, to invoke their (probable, in Smith's case) geological mentor, Hugh Miller, it was Smith's 'old red sandstone' - his geological learning ground. In recent years drilling near Moina has identified a potentially valuable gold deposit, suggesting that, more than a century after their deaths, Clarke and Smith might yet be proven harbingers of a Tasmanian Eldorado.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ 'Mr Smith's Exploration', *Examiner* 31 December 1859, p.3

¹⁵⁹ See Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, pp.54-67.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, '\$1 m Search for Gold-Zinc', *Advocate* 7 November 1996, p.5; 'Effort to Find Gold More Intense', *Advocate* 26 November 1996, pp.1-2.

Chapter 4: A Decade of Discovery: the General Search for Minerals in Tasmania

'What would Washington have been had he not succeeded? A rebel and a fool! Success marked the man.'¹ With such resolution James Smith set out on a prospecting expedition in the early 1860s. Although his faith in the Forth River gold would never waver, by then he had abandoned in disgust the impossible task of opening up that 'goldfield' alone.² He would not have been gratified either to learn that obtaining a reward for discovering a payable goldfield was problematical. How much profit constituted 'payable'? Even the colonial secretary was uncertain.³ A more manageable, widespread search for any valuable mineral deposits would now occupy his efforts and extend his mining education.

During this period, the legend of the indomitable lone explorer undergoing severe privations was born. It was pioneering work. Gold, the very symbol of instant riches, was almost the be-all and end-all of Tasmanian mining aspirations at this time. The second phase of Smith's mining education would carry him far beyond the practical experience of Bendigo and Mount Alexander. Although a great prize lay ahead of him, the ground work was arduous and solitary. For a dozen years *terra incognita* ruled his life. By the end of this period his experience in the bush and consultation with 'experts', including government geologist Charles Gould, and Ronald Gunn, had equipped him superbly for prospecting in Tasmanian conditions.

The mainland gold rushes continued to cast their spell over Tasmanian aspirations in the 1860s, despite the failure of the Fingal field.⁴ Real or alleged gold strikes - even in the suburbs and outskirts of Launceston - were a regular event during

¹ John Nottage to Smith 20 November 1880, no. 438, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

² Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

³ colonial secretary to Smith 12 December 1860, no. 103, NS234/3/1(AOT)

⁴ In 1856 the Tasmanian government granted £2,000 for exploration work at Fingal under the administration of the Fingal Gold Exploration Committee. See Glyn Roberts, *The Role of Government in the Development of the Tasmanian Metal Mining Industry: 1803-1883*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 1999, pp.27-31 and 34.

this decade.⁵ Although deposits of coal and iron were known to exist on the island, no significant mineral discovery had been reported, and provisions for mineral leases remained incomplete until 1867. (The *Goldfields Act* [1859] made provision for gold leases only. The *Minerals Lands Act* [1862], repealed by the *Waste Lands Act* [1863], enabled mineral leases to be issued on Crown land. The *Waste Lands Act* no 4 [1867] made it possible to take out a mineral lease on the sea shore or on land reserved along the margin of a river or stream.) Most of the practical mining knowledge in Tasmania was derived from the gold rushes, and the exodus of young men to the Otago goldfields in 1861 only intensified the focus on that mineral. Significantly, Smith did not join them. While living in Launceston, James Fenton described the Otago exodus to him:

Hundreds and I may say thousands are leaving the colony. The state of Launceston can hardly be described. Poverty exists to a larger extent than was ever known before. Many are too poor to move, and many are leaving determined never to set foot again on this island.⁶

Conditions were probably worse at the Forth, although by the 1860s it no longer resembled a frontier settlement. Despite the danger posed to shipping by a sandbar at the Forth River heads, commerce was growing. Several local shipowners traded with Launceston and the mainland, exchanges taking place at two large stores, while as many post offices managed the daily mail service. A hotel two kilometres away at the heads had been the scene of occasional disorder and pre-bridge drowning.⁷ Then, in 1867, the Forth got its own drinking-hole, with an immediate impact:

They fought like savages. Anything that came in the way was used as a weapon of defence; tomahawks, handsaws, and sticks were the order of the day, and there were black eyes and broken heads in profusion. The constable happened to be out of the way, and they fought until they

⁵ Roberts, *The Role of Government*, pp.18, 20 and 25; James Fenton, *History of Tasmania from its Discovery in 1642 to the Present Time*, J Walch and Sons, Hobart, 1884, p.308

⁶ James Fenton to Smith 23 September 1861, no. 20, NS234/3/1 (AOT). See also Roger Kelleway, 'Tasmania and the Otago Gold Rush 1861-1865', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 46, no. 4, December 1999, pp.213-9.

⁷ T Stephens, 'Pioneering', *Examiner* 19 April 1913, p.3

were tired. The mob dipped [district surveyor] Mr Dooley in a mudhole, I presume with the view of changing his color, which they succeeded in doing.⁸

Three churches - Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist and Congregational - ministered to the more spiritual needs of the Forth Christians. Mathison's Congregational ministry was particularly successful:

Religion is the predominating theme with many here. Five numerous attended special prayer meetings were held in the Independent Chapel last week, when there were several applications to join the church. The revival is...for the most part but a fuller manifestation of religious principles which have long been at work, and which have been strengthened under the ministration of the Rev Walter Mathison. The Sabbath School, too, has done its part well through a number of years, teaching many to read, instilling the principles of religion...⁹

Mathison's church survived on private subscriptions, gifts and entrance fees raised by the annual anniversary tea meeting, which for many would have been the major social event of the year. Smith was probably among the 400 or more people who gathered at this event at Don or Forth to play and watch cricket and other games, consume a 'monster spread' and then join in a prayer meeting.¹⁰ Smith commemorated the tenth anniversary of Mathison's arrival with a tribute:

While here with us thy labor has been hard,
But it is blest with many good results,
As will attest the converts thou hast made -
The concord that prevails amongst thy flock -
The little they evince of bigotry -
The handsome chapels by subscription built,

⁸ 'River Forth', *Examiner* 15 June 1867, p.5

⁹ *Examiner* 14 December 1865; cited in H J W Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910: the Establishment of an Agricultural Community*, Ph D thesis, Australian National University, 1969, p.270

¹⁰ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, pp.268-9

Wherein to render services divine
Under thy pastorship when duty bids -
The Sabbath Schools of thy wide pastorals,
Wherein the young around are edified...¹¹

There was no public school, however, which is probably why the Fentons moved to Launceston in 1861. Their new household appears to have been a perpetual sickbay, and their hearts, at least, remained at their previous home. One of Helena Fenton's (James Fenton's wife's) dreams also focused on a Forth acquaintance. Her husband, who was already aware of her gift of premonition, advised James Smith that Helena had seen his latest gold expedition turn out a success:

you came to town [Launceston] and wanted me to meet you at the
Kentish Plains. You did not make it known but you would go back by
yourself and meet me there, when you would take me to where the real
stuff was lying in lumps as big as my head.¹²

On this occasion she was off target, dreaming an allegory, or crediting Smith with possession of the fabled 'Philosopher's Stone', which turned base metal into gold.¹³ Smith's 'real stuff' would not be gold. He would never make a major gold discovery: one of the significant outcomes of Smith's mining career was that it introduced a future that involved a wide range of other valuable minerals.

Although Thomas Hainsworth's letters became less frequent after his move to Table Cape in 1861, he gave important help to Smith, particularly as the latter searched for minerals with which he was unfamiliar. An undated letter has Hainsworth tentatively identifying an iron ore sample, probably from Smith's Iron Cliffs find in 1861; in another, he assays Smith specimens.¹⁴ In the former letter Hainsworth nominates James Fenton as the best authority on minerals in the Devon district. That Fenton had no recorded mining experience gives some indication of the paucity of mineralogical knowledge with

¹¹ 'Ernest James', (James Smith) 'To the Reverend Mathieson [sic] of the River Forth', *Examiner* 15 August 1867

¹² James Fenton to James Smith, 23 September 1861, no. 20, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

¹³ See John Read, *Through Alchemy to Chemistry: a Procession of Ideas & Personalities*, Bell and Sons, London, 1961, pp.28-40.

¹⁴ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 15 January 1862, no. 29, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

which the novice prospector was faced. What Smith could not learn locally about chemistry, geology and mineralogy he got from bought and borrowed books. Obtaining samples from other colonies also helped him identify rocks he unearthed.

As Hainsworth settled into his familiar environment of poverty and self-inflicted mental injury, he took solace in reading a volume of Hugh Miller essays which 'have had my whole soul aroused.' As a result he felt

a renewed determination to commence afresh the all important work of self culture. The more I read, the more I admire and wonder and feel humbled. Sometimes the latter feeling is so powerful that I despair of ever doing anything worth being remembered by my children. May God help me!¹⁵

Smith probably felt a similar urgency as he again took self-culture into the field.

The lone prospector: fact and mythology

Smith's books and teachers were the guideposts for the work upon which his legend is based. It was less glamorous work than the gold expeditions. There was no glint in the tin dish to attract prospecting companions. There were no public meetings, no track-cutting subscriptions or prospecting funds to ease the way. The same frustrations - limited means, dense scrub, flooding rivers and want of access - obtained. No family, no wife, awaited his return from the bush, no welcome was there in his 'humble tenement' when he reputedly collapsed weak from exposure and hunger,¹⁶ having been given up for lost.¹⁷

¹⁵ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 14 October 1862, no. 44, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

¹⁶ Edward Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies: Letters to India from North-West Tasmania* (ed. Scott Bennett), Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1980, letter VIII, June 1878, p.26

¹⁷ according to Reverend W Law, 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877. See also John McCall, 'Tasmania: its Resources and Future', *Journal of the Royal Colonial Institute*, part 1, 16, December 1909, p.27

Some strangers, apparently, viewed Smith's almost obsessive exploration more with pity than with admiration, and perhaps a dash of the ingrained European settler's fear of the 'wilderness'. He was 'a shingle short'¹⁸ or at least an eccentric hermit. Occasionally he was publicly praised:

Mr Smith with toilsome energy, and worthy patriotism - pick on shoulder and spade in hand - may penetrate wildernesses, and even with the singleness of purpose he has evinced, lay bare to the world the result of his labours for the benefit of those who might follow him - but no reward is he promised other than the knowledge that he has done a public good.¹⁹

Tales grew of his feverish energy. A 57-kilo load he humped over Black Bluff was reputed to have seen him through a three-month pine-cutting expedition (Smith's pine-cutting is discussed later in this chapter). A fellow prospector, Alec Hill, recalled that, while resting at the end of an arduous day's tramp, he was astonished to see Smith stepping from crag to crag on the brow of a cliff, hammering at the rock and examining the results by the light of the moon. Over mountain and river the 'Philosopher' had lugged a load that, according to Hill, would break an ordinary horse, yet he looked as fresh as if he had reclined on a couch all day.²⁰

Smith quickly learned the essentials of prospecting alone or, at least, with a dog as his only companion. He was at the mercy of all nature and misfortune could throw at him. Every morsel of food was vital, and so much as a broken limb or a sudden fresh in a river could spell the end.²¹ It is perhaps from Adam Lindsay Gordon's tragic poem 'Gone',²² about the death of Burke and Wills, that Smith gained the potential transformation into a pile of 'bleached bones' ('he whose bones in yon desert bleach'd') to be happened upon by a later explorer. Bleaching bones in the desert is fine; how the

¹⁸ 'Constant' (Thomas Hainsworth), "Philosopher' Smith', *Cornwall Chronicle* 3 September 1873

¹⁹ 'Our Resources', *Cornwall Chronicle* 30 April 1862

²⁰ Lawrence Fleming to Smith 17 August 1877, no. 170; Alec Hill to Smith 20 September 1877, no. 189, NS234/3/6 (AOT)

²¹ *Tasmanian Mail* 4 August 1877, p.13

²² cited by Ken Inglis, *Australian Colonists: an Exploration of Social History 1788-1870*, Melbourne University Press, 1993 (first published 1974), p.304

sun would have penetrated Smith's 'sunless forest' in order to bleach him is harder to imagine.

Smith learned to minimise the dangers of climbing cliffs and fording streams. A current that threatened to carry him away could be countered by remaining side-on to it and propping himself up with a stick. This implement also aided him in turning around if he decided to retreat.²³ On one occasion a premonition saved him. At the end of an exhausting day Smith lay down to rest in his sleeping-bag in a clearing, the onset of darkness having prevented him from erecting his tent. A dream in which he saw himself speared through the chest and killed by a falling branch prompted him to relocate on the other side of the clearing during the night. Sure enough, morning revealed a sharp, broken limb projecting from the earth where he had originally lain.²⁴ On another occasion he suffered snowblindness after being caught in a storm.²⁵

Once Smith's dog almost brought him to grief as together they clambered around the precipitous margin of a deep river, by dislodging a rock which whizzed past its master's head. Other canines could not keep up with him: Smith lost four dogs on expeditions to the Dove River. He had two companions in the gorge at a point where frequently he had to ford the stream and climb cliffs. After following him for a few hours, the pair lay down on a flat rock and were left behind. Smith recovered one, a Sky terrier, at nearby Middlesex station. Although Fields's men, like 'Jack the Shepherd' - Jack Francis - at Middlesex, welcomed the prospector, a stockrider shot one of the second pair of dogs, a greyhound, which interfered when he tried to round up a herd of cattle.²⁶ Smith believed that other dogs fell prey to the thylacine.²⁷

A 'sharp' dog was a bonus. It would keep away quolls ('tiger cats') and thylacines ('tigers') when they were so bold as to covet the meat in Smith's knapsack while he slept. One quoll came away with the prize. Smith recalled several encounters with

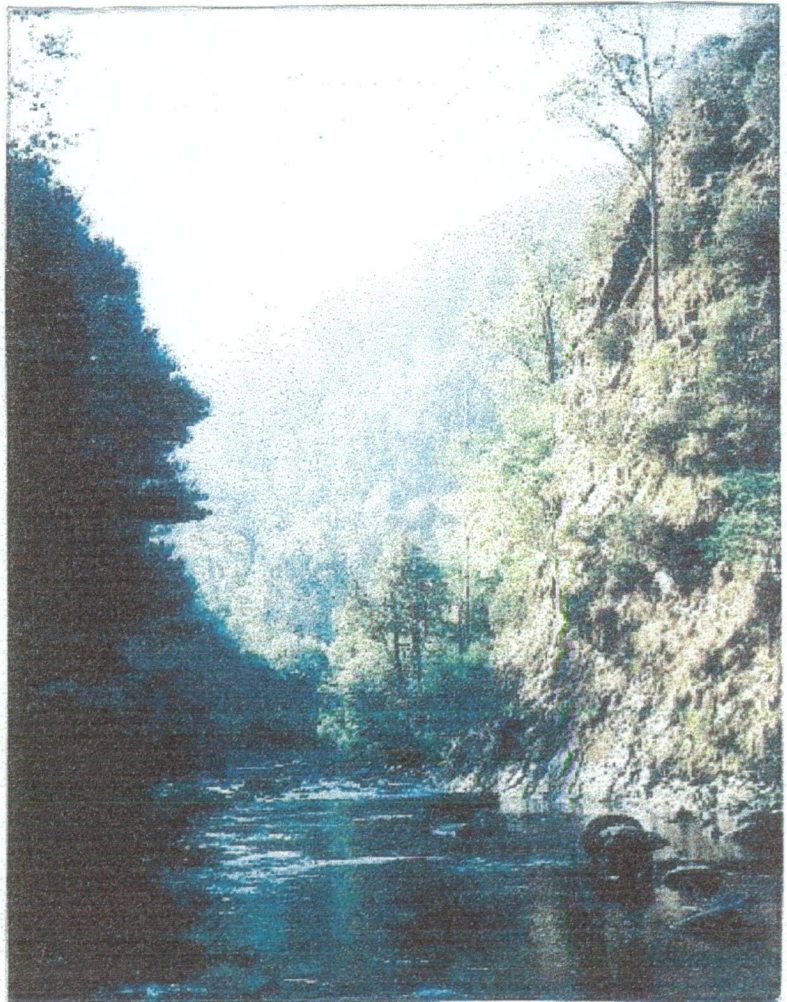
²³ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁴ A B Crowther, 'A Dream-warning That Saved a Life: a Real-life Sketch', A3159 (Mitchell Library), p.1

²⁵ Edwin Cummings (to Smith 26 May 1882, no. 170, NS234/3/11 [AOT]) recalls Smith being caught in a snowstorm on Black Bluff; Smith recalls suffering snowblindness in a letter to Richard How (2 June 1893, no. 417, NS234/2/17 [AOT]).

²⁶ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁷ Smith to Ashworth P Burke 4 December 1894, no. 380, NS234/2/18 (AOT)



(Top) Cradle Mountain and Dove Lake, where Smith prospected in 1859. Snow is possible any time of the year, and the glacial landscape is steep.

(Bottom) The rugged country of the Dove River gorge, in which Smith prospected, lost dogs and guided his pine logs. The Dove River flows out of the lake in the photo above.

'tigers', how his dog brought one to bay, dodging right and left in an effort to attack it from behind. These featured in recollections of his bush experience:

Mr Smith told several anecdotes of his bush life, relating to the fauna of the island, with which he is naturally most familiar. The native tiger is bolder than usually credited. Two cases were cited in which the animal was the aggressor, and men had to fight for dear life. One happened at the Black River, near Circular Head. The man broke his gun stock in defence, and only succeeded in despatching his enemy by dint of using the barrel part with all his might. One of Fields' men in the Hampshire or Surrey Hills had an equally hard fight. Mr Smith on one occasion was awoken out of his sleep by a tiger prowling, but drove him off....Tigers, on occasion, it is certain will come dangerously close, and no doubt if they got a chance at a man's throat would kill him. The bite is not like that of a bull-dog, which takes hold and sticks, but rather of the cur or jackal, a series of snaps.²⁸

Thomas Jones also related an occasion on which Smith's canine companion failed to raise the alarm. Smith described in his notes how

when my camp fire had got very low I saw in a gleam of light from it a very large tiger creeping towards my feet. I at once sprang up and seizing my axe shouted at and menaced the tiger, and my dog, a large spaniel, rushing forward the tiger made off and I saw no more of it.²⁹

Smith was not the only prospector to be wary of thylacines. Con Lynch, who discovered gold in the Queen River, always slept with a loaded revolver, a bill-hook and a tomahawk at the ready in case of 'tiger' attack.³⁰ If Smith sensed danger of attack, he made sure he had firelight to see it by and a weapon handy.³¹ He had his most

²⁸ Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 37: Waratah', *Tasmanian Mail* 17 May 1884, p.23. See also Robert Paddle, *The Last Tasmanian Tiger: the History and Extinction of the Thylacine*, Cambridge University Press, Oakleigh, Victoria, 2000.

²⁹ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

³⁰ Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania: Volume II: Colony and Statehood from 1856 to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p.9

³¹ Smith to James Fenton 14 November 1890, NS234/2/15 (AOT)

memorable encounter with a thylacine at a place which afterwards bore the name Tiger Plain, from the frequency of his meetings with them there.³² He watched his dog approach the largest 'tiger' he had seen at this time - its body was more than a metre long, with a 43-centimetre tail. Fearing that it was large enough to harm him and that it might return with its mate and surprise him in the night, he decided to kill it. While his dog fastened onto it, Smith seized the chance to smash its skull with his tomahawk, but this only seemed to strengthen its resolve as

reeling and staggering [it]...fought the dog for fully two minutes, inflicting bite after bite in his neck in rapid succession; and placing its fore feet against the upper part of his breast pushed him off by main strength whenever he fastened upon its throat. While this was going on I could not strike a second blow for fear of wounding the dog, at such a rate did they roll about; at length, however, seeing that the tiger was becoming weak, I seized it by the hind legs, and, placing my foot on the dog to keep him steady, I struck it again with my tomahawk, severing the spine of its neck and causing its instant death.³³

A short distance from Tiger Plain, across the Lea River, was a lagoon once known as Lake Stormont.³⁴ Before Robinson's time this had been a favourite Aboriginal 'resort' where they fashioned spears from tea-tree, being comfortably remote from the white man.³⁵ Since then that neck of the woods had grown busier. The grazing brothers Field had leased the nearby Middlesex Plains station, stocking it and the adjoining Crown land with cattle. Ironically, while the Aborigines had been found and removed, Smith believed that European interference had benefited the thylacines on the northern verge

³² This was on the northern verge of the Lea River. Smith named the place Tiger Plain (see Ronald Smith, 'Trip Over the Black Bluff', NS234/17/19 [AOT] and Middlesex mining tenement map [Mines Department of Tasmania]). The name Tiger Plain has since been reallocated to a plateau on the Black Bluff Range further north.

³³ J S (James Smith), 'Tasmanian Tigers', *Examiner* 22 November 1862, p.2

³⁴ p.3 of January and February 1912 'journal' (notebook) of government geologist W H Twelvetreves, kept during his examination of the Middlesex area for his *The Middlesex and Mount Claude Mining Field*, Mines Department of Tasmania, Hobart, 1913. The notebook is held by the library of the Department of Resources and Energy.

³⁵ N J B Plomley (ed.), *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1966, 30 June 1834, p.893

of the Lea: the 'tigers' occupied Tiger Plain because there they received the game 'hunted' in that direction by the Middlesex Plains stockman's dogs.³⁶

Every prospecting field has its own dangers and privations. Some mainland Australian diggers chased a phantom glimmer for years across mountain and desert, only to succumb to thirst, fever, at the end of a gunbarrel or the point of a spear. In 1890s Coolgardie the red dust from thousands of dry blowers

hung over the field like a cloud. It billowed and waved and disappeared into this mist, to return again to settle into eyes and ears and mouths.

This red dust, how we walked in it, breathed it, cursed it and wished for cold water to wash it away!³⁷

It was a case of 'horses for courses':

The men from the dry regions of North Queensland and the Northern Territory were in fact a distinct breed from the prospectors who had blazed the gold trail along the mountains of eastern Australia....This new breed of prospector could endure dust and intense heat; he often preferred them. He was adept at prospecting without water, a master of dryblowing and specking. Often he liked Aboriginal women and so he prospected for long periods in the one area. He succeeded where other gold-seekers failed.³⁸

For Tasmania, take out the desert, heat and Aborigines, and add bush and water. In Mark Ireland's tales of the early days at Macquarie Harbour, Mount Heemskirk and the Pieman, the water is a grim reaper which can be cheated once but which will ultimately claim its marked prey.³⁹ The set of stock privations can be traced from Smith through to the post-World War II era, as the 1958 story of Alan McCormick and Albert Miller, prospectors in the Arthur River wilds, illustrates:

³⁶ Smith to James Fenton 14 November 1890, NS234/2/15 (AOT)

³⁷ Leslie Robert Menzies, *A Gold Seeker's Odyssey*, John Long, London, 1937, p.107

³⁸ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.168

³⁹ Mark Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East and West Coast of Tasmania from 1876 to 1913*, *Examiner*, Launceston, 1915?, pp. 12, 22, 39 and 40

They had to cut their way through horizontal scrub, scale precipitous cliffs and climb steep valleys and gorges.⁴⁰

After that, the suffering can go two ways: either the jungle is too thick to admit a substantial backpack or swag, or a back-breaking load is humped. In the first case, the small swag would have no room for a tent. Although the highland climate was so severe that, according to 'Bat' Thomas, Smith's horse grew a protective coat like that of a polar bear when lost for a few months at the Surrey Hills,⁴¹ both Thomas and George Renison Bell claim that Smith took no tent or blanket, huddling instead under a bush, in a hollow log or bark gunyah, or over his campfire, at the mercy of the elements.⁴²

In reality, in Smith's case this staple of the bushman's privations seems improbable. Given that calico tents weighing less than two kilos were then available (William Archer used one on his 1848 excursion to Mother Cummings Peak, Mount Ironstone and Meander Falls⁴³), why would Smith go without? He certainly took a tent to Mount Bischoff, and that was not the first time he had done so.⁴⁴ The suggestion that Smith did not carry a tent, like his march on the horizontal scrub, probably originated in the north-western Tasmanian exploration of the Van Diemen's Land Company surveyor Henry Hellyer. Hellyer, like Jorgen Jorgenson before him, travelled without a tent on his 20-day trek to the Hampshire and Surrey Hills in 1827, his party shivering the wet nights away swaddled in blankets. This can probably be put down to lack of experience of Tasmanian conditions: having learned its lesson, Hellyer's party carried tents on the extraordinarily gruelling Mackintosh River expedition of 1828. Without them they would certainly have died.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, the bushman who improvises a shelter from bark or dosses down in a hollow log has long been one of the standards of Tasmanian bush mythology, as a metaphor for toughness. Any knotty old snarer (the Bennett's wallaby, pademelon, brush

⁴⁰ 'Search for the Elusive Blue Peak', *Advocate* 2 August 1958, p.13

⁴¹ B W Thomas, 'Reward to a Public Benefactor', *Cornwall Chronicle* 27 July 1877

⁴² E A Bell, 'Bell's Find Boosted State', *Saturday Evening Mercury* 16 March 1874, p.31;

B W Thomas, 'Reward to a Public Benefactor', *Cornwall Chronicle* 27 July 1877

⁴³ W Archer, 'Notes of an Excursion to Cummings Head and the Falls of the Meander River', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 1870, p.54

⁴⁴ Crowther, 'A Dream-warning', p.1; Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

and ringtail possums formed the basis of the Tasmanian fur industry) recalled by a fellow snarer, for example, would invariably be invested with indifference to his sleeping arrangements.⁴⁶

Snarers, at least, had reason to construct makeshift shelters, since they often inspected lines of snares many kilometres apart in the course of a day, and bad weather could prevent their return to base camp in time for nightfall. Some, such as Paddy Hartnett and Bert Nichols, built a hut at each of their regular 'runs' to obviate this problem,⁴⁷ but the toughest of the tough, such as Maf Carter and Gordon 'Bull' Connell, in the upper Forth River system, were reputedly impervious to injury, cold, wild bulls, maggots or gangrene, giving snow and rain little chance of disturbing their sleep.⁴⁸ Peter Carter, Maf's son, told the present writer that, while snaring, he, his brother and father often slept in a hollow log near Mount Beecroft (in the Black Bluff Range), using a tarpaulin to keep out the elements.⁴⁹

It is likely that Smith, whose daily whereabouts depended on what indications of mineral deposits he found, was sometimes placed in the same position of having to improvise shelter while far from his base camp. A system of huts would not have worked for Smith since, unlike the hunters, he did not return to the same locations year after year. Nor in his search for minerals would he have had enough time, provisions or the implements necessary to build a hut. The story of the man who was sometimes forced to sleep without a tent would, in the course of repetition, soon lose its context. *Why did he not carry a tent? Because, surely, he carried too much weight already, and that bush must have been too thick to allow him to carry a tent anyway.*

Smith's description of how once he glimpsed an approaching thylacine by the gleam of his campfire suggests that, like other excursionists and expeditioners, for the

⁴⁵ See C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, pp.58-69 and 90-101.

⁴⁶ For instance, Wally Connell recalled the legendary Middlesèx Plains/Cradle region snarer Harry Vernham living 'under a hollow log' (personal communication 22 September 1997). See also Ralph and Kathleen Gowlland, *Trampled Wilderness: the History of South-West Tasmania*, Devonport, 1976, pp.149-50.

⁴⁷ See Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, pp.98, 149-50

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p.152

⁴⁹ interview with Peter Carter 14 October 1995

sake of warmth he slept with his tent open with his feet extended toward a fire, which he would feed when he awoke during the night.⁵⁰ Other simple measures would have brought a little comfort to the bush which the mythology of the heroic explorer would not recognise. A mattress was improvised from fern fronds. S B Emmett describes placing layers of dry bark 6 to 8 inches (15 to 20 centimetres) thick beneath his bedding to guard against rain washing through his tent during the night.⁵¹ Emmett's calico tent withstood heavy rain and hail, although heavy snow would have caused it to sag. Smith's legendary spartan sleeping arrangements contrast sharply with the elaborate procedure described by George Renison Bell while prospecting with a party near the Arthur River, the territory of Emmett and later McCormick and Miller, in 1906. While this was almost five decades after Smith's first prospecting expedition, the basics of camping would probably have changed little:

Arriving at the spot, wet and heavily laden, we sat right down on the wet ground and divested ourselves of our loads, and then actively began to get forked poles and poles without forks, and logs, as well as thin sticks for the bottoms of the bunks. One of us selected a leatherwood sapling, felled it, and cut a length off. This was split into thin pieces, and with the help of some 'bull's wool' (the bark of the stringy-bark tree), brought from a distance we proceeded to make a fire. This, however, was a work of patience, care, and attention, but at last, by coaxing and fanning, it succeeded. The billy was boiled, and we all stood round and partook of our crib, after which we worked away at pitching the camp with a will, as, rain or no rain, it has to be done. At last the tent was up, with fly and fire-fly, then in went the logs, across and across, pigsty fashion, leaving spaces between the upper third tier for the thin round sticks to lie level, and form the bottoms of the bunks, which, when done, are three in number, one on either side, and across the end, with a space in the middle forming the floor, which, needless to say, is the ground. Then

⁵⁰ For another example of this, see 'The West Coast Goldfields: III', *Tasmanian Mail* 27 March 1880.

comes the bedding - generally the fronds of the old-man fern. These are laid on a framework erected over the fire and partially dried and put in the bunks; then the blankets are placed over and round the fire, the wet garments changed, and finally we go to bed, and in spite of the general dampness sleep well, and do not feel much the worse, if any, though every day sees us more or less wet.⁵²

As noted earlier, Tasmanian bush lore insists that the forest is either prohibitively thick, preventing the bushman from hauling a tent, or its rigours demand so much food and gear that he becomes a pack-horse. Smith tried the back-breaking option, according to Alec Hill; presumably a load that would 'break an ordinary horse' included a tent as well as a large stock of provisions.⁵³ Wringing every possible drama from the tale of McCormick and Miller, the *Advocate* writer or his interviewees opted to plant a foot in both camps on their typical expedition:

Each carried a 90 lb [41-kilo] pack...sugar bag packs. The framed rucksacks are useless in country where men must make their own narrow track through wall-like scrub...

And yet

tents were not taken because they would take up too much room in the pack. This mean they always slept in the open, often in pouring rain.⁵⁴

Forty-one kilos is a lot of food, mining implements, bedding and footwear. In addition to food, pick, axe (probably the more practical tomahawk) and prospecting dish, Smith's knapsack contained matches, possum-skin sleeping-bag (with the fur on the inside⁵⁵), a small calico tent and, presumably, a billy. George Renison Bell added a pocket compass to that list.⁵⁶ Brush-possum-skin bedding was standard issue for bush excursions, the best rugs of this kind reputedly being produced by shepherds, who

⁵¹ S B Emmett, 'Circular Head', *Cornwall Chronicle* 9 November 1859

⁵² G R B (George Renison Bell), 'Another Piece of Wellington', 1906 newspaper story among George Renison Bell papers (Bell papers)

⁵³ Alec Hill to Smith 20 September 1877, no. 189, NS234/3/6 (AOT)

⁵⁴ 'Search for the Elusive Blue Peak'

⁵⁵ Crowther, 'A Dream-warning', p.1

⁵⁶ E A Bell, 'Bell's Find Boosted State', *Saturday Evening Mercury* 16 March 1874, p.31

would have snared for meat and extra cash.⁵⁷ The same goes for the rations. The menu for Archer's three-day trip in 1848 included cold meat, bread, rice, sugar and tea. Bread baked beforehand would last three days, but not the weeks or months of the true bush expedition, hence prospectors Smith, G R Bell and Emmett carried flour in order to make damper as they needed it, plus a rising agent such as yeast powder, cream of tartar or hops. The other essentials were bacon (which cooked in its own fat), tea and sugar.⁵⁸ (Binks gives this as bushman Thomas Bather Moore's one-time shopping list: bacon, butter, flour, tea, sugar, tobacco, jam and yeast powder.⁵⁹ As access to the highlands improved, allowing bushmen to ride or drive closer to their destinations, rations diversified and the camp oven took over some of the functions of the billy.) Firearms were an integral part of Smith's outdoor life and, just as on his farmlands at Forth in later life he usually carried a rifle with which to shoot game, a muzzle-loading, five-chambered Belgia revolver was included in his prospecting kit.⁶⁰

Smith wore out his boots on an 1859 expedition,⁶¹ a common experience in the prospector's life:

Always they took a spare pair of new boots. The average life of a pair of boots in the country south of the Arthur is 10 days to a fortnight.⁶²

Boots surrender their soles, clothes are torn from his back ('We were wet through...and our clothes torn off,' S B Emmett recalled a bout with the bauera.⁶³) Smith, it was written, would rise at daylight from his improvised shelter to the prospect of a portion of biscuit and a pannikin of tea or water to revive him. He placed great store in brown sugar as a

⁵⁷ W H Wheelwright, *Bush Wanderings of a Naturalist*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1976 (originally published 1861), p.44

⁵⁸ C J Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1988, p.45. See also Soubriquet, 'A Trip to the Western Mountains', *Examiner* 28 December 1867, p.5

⁵⁹ Binks, *Pioneers*, p.45

⁶⁰ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith and the Discovery of Tin at Mount Bischoff', 1947, 6-701C, ML MSS3596 (Mitchell Library), p.6

⁶¹ 'Mr Smith's Exploration', *Examiner* 31 December 1859, p.3

⁶² 'Search for the Elusive Blue Peak'. For another example of worn out prospecting boots, see Ronald Smith to Gustav Weindorfer 11 May 1910, NS234/19/16 (AOT).

⁶³ S B Emmett, 'Circular Head', *Cornwall Chronicle* 9 November 1859. See also J S, *In Tasman's Land: Gleams and Dreams of the Great North-West*, Emu Bay Railway Company, 1903, p.18.

food, apparently having at times survived for days on water and sugar.⁶⁴ Again there is a Hellyer precedent: the surveyor's 1827 party boiled the last sustenance from its sugar bag and mixed remnant flour with hot water after all other rations were exhausted on the return journey from St Valentines Peak.⁶⁵ A probably apocryphal story has Smith plucking hairs out of his beard with which to make possum snares, this being cited as an illustration of 'the spirit of the early prospector',⁶⁶ one which rivals James Crotty's alleged recourse to eating button-grass while developing the Mount Lyell mine.⁶⁷

Fish sometimes cured Smith's hunger. Like others, he carried a few fish hooks and a roll of whipcord to serve as fishing line.⁶⁸ While the blackfish and mountain or rock trout of inland waters were reluctant victims, he had little trouble capturing blackfish with night lines when camped along northern rivers not far from the sea.⁶⁹ On occasions these were so ravenous they would snap at fresh meat tied to a string, and it was an easy matter to land them. When the fish would not bite, his dog could prove a useful hunter, bringing in a wallaby, wombat or echidna. (George Renison Bell preferred to hunt down a snake, crack off its head whiplash-style or against a tree, then grill it.⁷⁰) Smith was reputedly not much bothered by fatigue or hunger when he thought he was onto a good thing, and, on one occasion when he tarried longer at some mineral formation than his supplies permitted, he had to kill his dog to 'save' it from the agony of starvation.⁷¹

When the emaciated prospector turns for home, the provider of fish turn into 'treacherous watercourses'.⁷² He now finds that the low streams that attracted his panning dish have conspired against him behind his back:

flooded rivers were the biggest hazard. Often on the inward journey they
were able to wade the Arthur and small crèeks wihout much trouble. But

⁶⁴ A B Crowther, *James Smith*, A3160 (Mitchell Library), p.6

⁶⁵ Binks, *Explorers*, p.68

⁶⁶ 'Dearth of Prospectors' (leader), *Zeehan and Dundas Herald* 5 August 1914

⁶⁷ Geoffrèy Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, Melbourne University Press, 1954, p.109

⁶⁸ See also 'The West Coast Goldfields: III', *Tasmanian Mail* 27 March 1880, p.8

⁶⁹ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁷⁰ E A Bell, 'Bell's Find Boosted State', *Saturday Evening Mercury*, 16 March 1874, p.31

⁷¹ Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania*, A W Birchall and Sons, Launceston, 1909, p.301

when rain set in they were faced with raging torrents on the return journey.⁷³

Most of the pre-canopy-surfing Smith bush experience is neatly summarised by a description of him in the *Tasmanian Mail*

fighting his way through the dreaded horizontal, climbing over hills, fording creeks and rivers, dipping in their beds for indications of minerals, chipping at rocks, loading himself with specimens, struggling with cold, rain, hunger, and weariness, and all alone, miles and miles away from the nearest homestead. In such circumstances flooded streams, a broken limb or violent sprain, meant certain death. The quiet heroism of the man in enduring all this and turning to it again, is far beyond praise.⁷⁴

By the time of this description, Livingstone had twice returned to the jungle before succumbing to it; and Franklin had lost his life returning to the perilous ice-fields that he had already defied, as Shackleton would do early in the next century. Would Smith go the same way?

The apex, though, in the fund of bush privations is not the lost explorer, but the last scrap of food made priceless by redemption, having been given up for lost. It seemed that the thylacine had finally trumped Smith when he arrived back at camp after an exhausting day in drenching rain at Mount Bischoff:

I looked for the small piece of bread I had left in my knapsack. But it was not there. The loss of that piece of bread I felt to be a cruel disappointment. Presently I reflected that some bush animal might have been scared away by my approach when trying to appropriate the piece of bread. I therefore commenced a search on the ground and then I found the bread apparently untouched. After the disappointment I felt so

⁷² 'George Scott' (A B Crowther, nee Smith), 'The Discoverer of Mount Bischoff', *The Lone Hand* 2 December 1907, p.201

⁷³ 'Search for the Elusive Blue Peak'

⁷⁴ 'Mr James Smith', *Tasmanian Mail* 4 August 1877, p.4

happy that small as the meal was I enjoyed it with the utmost satisfaction.⁷⁵

McCormick and Miller's biographer adds a neat homily:

On one trip all they had left was one small piece of pickled pork to last them a day and night and it fell from Albert's pack when he stumbled. They went back and found the meat almost black with leeches. So they pulled the leeches off, grilled the meat and ate it.

Bushmen can't afford to be fussy.⁷⁶

This is not to suggest that later prospectors or their biographer fabricated their accounts, just that stock phrases and descriptions had long since come to stand for the prospector's trials and privations. Writers who knew Smith's legend (or perhaps those of bushmen before him) began with certain assumptions: the bush was thick, the nights were miserable, the rivers torrential, rations were exhausted, boots worn out, clothes torn off, the hero was emaciated.⁷⁷

Smith's hardships in the bush were many but hardly unique, and there are obvious parallels between his bushlife and those of other Australian bushmen. T B Moore, the 'last of the Tasmanian explorers',⁷⁸ for instance, suffered similar hardships to Smith's: decades of struggle in the severe western climate eventually reduced him to a hobbling, bronchial wreck.⁷⁹ Moore spent much of 45 years exploring, prospecting and track-cutting the south-west and west. Such was his endurance that he sometimes covered 50 kilometres of virgin country in a day with 20 kilos on his back.⁸⁰ On some of his longest trips he travelled alone, relying upon his dogs to hunt down extra fucker.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁷⁶ 'Search for the Elusive Blue Peak'

⁷⁷ J S, *In Tasman's Land*, p.18

⁷⁸ Binks, *Explorers*, p.219. See also Ian McShane, 'Thomas Bather Moore (1850-1919)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, p.571.

⁷⁹ Ian McShane, *T B Moore - a Bushman of Learning*, B A (Hons) thesis, University of Tasmania, 1982, pp.4 and 7

⁸⁰ McShane, *T B Moore*, p.4

⁸¹ Binks, *Explorers*, p.222

Like Smith, Moore is distinguished from other bushmen/prospectors by the breadth and variety of his interests.⁸² Not only did he compose verse (he appears to have been a more talented poet than Smith)⁸³ and read geology in his bush tent (Smith also carried a book to read by the light of his campfire⁸⁴), educating himself, but he published papers about glaciation and was a keen entomologist and botanist.⁸⁵ He longed for acceptance and recognition in the scientific community.⁸⁶ 'Moore was not a solitary person,' Binks claims.

He was outgoing, tolerant, and kindly, liked nothing better than a good yarn with anyone he met and certainly enjoyed the company of others...⁸⁷

Yet, according to Binks, the quality that perhaps more than any other suited him to bush life was reconciliation to long periods of loneliness.⁸⁸ Smith was likewise reconciled. Both men were driven to extraordinary exertions in the bush by an ambition to prove themselves and to serve their colony.⁸⁹ History remembers only the successful: 'Success marked the man,' as Smith proclaimed about Washington. Had Moore staked a claim at the Mount Lyell Ironblow in 1883, as he apparently considered doing, his name would be much more familiar than it is today.⁹⁰

Other prospectors also won victory over great adversity. There are striking similarities, for example, between Smith's career and that of James Venture Mulligan.⁹¹ When he is allowed to tell his own story, Mulligan depicts a life which bears fascinating comparison to Smith's. Both were God-fearing, almost obsessive mineral hunters who sometimes trod where few or no white men had before. Both were reputedly too

⁸² *ibid*, p.219

⁸³ See 'Prospector's Ballad'; cited by Binks, *Explorers*, pp.227-8.

⁸⁴ Crowther, *James Smith*, p.7

⁸⁵ McShane, *T B Moore*, p.93

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p.3

⁸⁷ Binks, *Explorers*, p.227

⁸⁸ George Scott, 'The Discoverer of Mount Bischoff', p.201

⁸⁹ McShane, *T B Moore*, p.92

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p.54

⁹¹ James Venture Mulligan, *On the Trail of Gold: the Story of James Venture Mulligan, North Queensland's Greatest Prospector-Explorer: an Autobiography Quoted by Glenville Pike with Commentary*, Mareeba, Glenville Pike, 1998, p.126. See also H J Gibbney, 'James Venture Mulligan (1837-1907)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp.310-1

generous to succeed in business, pocketing only a small proportion of the fortune they generated.⁹² Like Smith, Mulligan was an excellent bushman, skilled with the pen and keenly observant during his travels. His reports contain many colourful descriptions of nature and Aboriginal culture, for example, the 'spotting' behaviour of cockatoos around water.⁹³

Mulligan migrated to Australia from County Down, Northern Ireland, at the age of 23 in 1860.⁹⁴ He arrived in Melbourne just as the Burke and Wills expedition was setting out: had he claimed a place in this, one of Australia's great 'heroic' enterprises (as he tried to), ironically, Mulligan's name might now be forgotten as a perished offsider instead of as one of the architects of the northern Queensland gold rushes. As Smith's die was cast in Victoria, the Irishman's rites of passage came at the Gympie goldfields in 1867 at the age of 30:

He was now an experienced miner, bushman and horseman; mining and exploration of new country, which was to be his passion for the rest of his life, now possessed him, as well as the urge to explore new country.⁹⁵

Between 1873 and 1905 Mulligan led twelve expeditions into the wild country bounded by Coen (on Cape York) in the north, the Burdekin River in the south and in the west by the Cloncurry district - a grand sweep of country many times bigger than Tasmania. His efforts and those of others who preceded him sparked the Palmer River rush and, three years later, the Hodgkinson rush. In addition, Mulligan found the first silver in Queensland and tin on the Wild River. The gold and tin fields opened up far northern Queensland, establishing the rival ports of Cairns and Port Douglas.⁹⁶

The limit of Smith's expeditions was determined by what he could carry, hunt and endure. Public and government apathy ensured he went alone, unfinanced, unaided. Sometimes, apparently, he nearly starved; Mulligan was more concerned about being dined upon than dining. The latter's were group ventures made with laden packhorses

⁹² Mulligan, *On the Trail of Gold*, p.98

⁹³ *ibid*

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p.1

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p.3

and sometimes replenished at staging-posts that allowed them to stay out for months at a time. Only seven of his twelve trips were made at his own expense; an interested government funded one and directed others. Mulligan's party won a £1,000 reward for its payable gold discovery at the Palmer River.⁹⁷ There was safety in numbers: illness, injury and flooded streams then posed less danger. In addition, however, Mulligan sometimes faced a human foe, hostile Aborigines. Although he clearly sympathised with the local tribesmen, he took part in several skirmishes with them, was speared in the leg and fired in self-defence, although his reports are perhaps deliberately obscure about whether he killed anyone.

How Mulligan might have fared in the claustrophobic tangle of the Tasmanian bush without the consolation of mateship and the back-up of the pack-horse is unknown. That was Smith's challenge. By 1867 he was so inured to solitary highland travel that he volunteered to single-handedly rescue a sailor shipwrecked at the Pieman River Heads:

It would be a disgrace to the whole colony for a barefooted shipwrecked sailor to die of starvation on one of our coasts when he could easily be rescued.

I would be willing to bring him away if others will assist to the amount of five pounds which would enable me to get a stock of provisions to the furthest point in the open country to which a horse could travel.

I should also want a tracing of the Pieman, showing its upper branches. I could, if necessary, search the coast to the westward for any survivors of the wrecks reported. I should go either from Cradle Mountain, or from near Mount Pearce, following Mr Burgess's track...⁹⁸

The man was eventually rescued by ship.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p.68

⁹⁷ Robert Logan Jack, *Northmost Australia: Three Centuries of Exploration, Discovery, and Adventure in and Around the Cape York Peninsula, Queensland*, Hesperian Press, Carlisle, Western Australia, 1998 (originally published 1922), p.439

⁹⁸ James Smith, 'Wreck at the Pieman', *Examiner* 12 September 1867, p.5

⁹⁹ S B Emmett, 'The Wreck at the Pieman, and Rescue of the Last Man', *Argus* 5 October 1867, p.4

Mulligan's tales of a frontier lifestyle are far more stirring than Smith's sparse notes about the hazards of solitary bushcraft. Death stalks diggers as they drag bootfuls of blood through leech-ridden tropical rainforests and across flood-prone rivers. Perhaps his bush life was harder than Smith's: it is impossible to say whether the Philosopher's efforts were the pluckier in the absence of support or Mulligan's in defiance of human interference. Although Smith carried a gun on the Victorian goldfields, and in several poems called for armed resistance to evil aggressors, how, in reality, he would have faced taking another's life in self-defence is unknown. While his sympathy for the Tasmanian Aborigines (presumably strengthened by meeting Dolly Dalrymple and possibly Fanny Cochrane Smith¹⁰⁰) was more than cloying sentiment, he never eyeballed them on tribal land and probably never experienced the moral dilemma that Mulligan did regularly. The death in 'death or victory' challenged only himself.

The explorer tradition: origins of Smith mythology

The prospector of romance draws more upon the tradition of the explorer than that of the miner, and it is there that some of the stock phrases about Tasmanian prospecting probably originated. As noted previously, some of the elements of Smith's legend were probably derived from Henry Hellyer's accounts of Tasmanian exploration in the late 1820s. J Paton Boyd wonders if his hero, the New Zealand gold prospector George Fairweather Moonlight, inspired Rudyard Kipling's 'The Explorer', since Kipling visited New Zealand when Moonlight's legend was in the ascendant. Kipling's poem, according to Boyd,

closely portrays significant highlights in Moonlight's travels and
character. The building of his little border station where the pack-track

¹⁰⁰ Smith notes about Tasmanian Aborigines, NS234/14/7 (AOT); A B Crowther discusses meeting Fanny Cochrane Smith, on the title page of her unpublished novel *Templeton Court*, AB3148 (Mitchell Library)

ends, climbing snowy mountains, wading through extensive swamps, crossing barren plains, fording swollen rivers, piercing dense forests in his explorations; spurred on by an inner compelling force to find something hidden from the eye of man; and on finding it telling others, keeping but a few samples of the rich gold lodes he located. Indeed, the final lines could well be the voice of dying Moonlight as he lay on a bush-bowered bed of pain with none but his Maker to comfort him: -

'God took care to hide that country till He judged his people
ready,

Then He chose me for His Whisper, and I've found
it, and it's yours.

God forgive me! No, I didn't. It's God's present to our nation,
Anybody might have found it, but - His Whisper came to me.'¹⁰¹

It is more likely that Moonlight's legend and Kipling's poem draw upon the same set of stock metaphors and ideas from the explorer tradition. Kipling's heroic explorer is the founder of new civilisations, exploiting whatever natural resources he finds, be it minerals, pasture, waterpower - whatever there is that might form the basis of a settlement. He is a selfless Christian on a mission to glorify the maker who drives him to search. (Smith, unlike George Robinson and Livingstone, styled himself a 'very humble instrument' of Tasmania's mineral wealth but did not see himself as performing God's work.¹⁰²) Yet even Kipling's explorer goes in secret, modestly keeping his mission from his neighbours, a far cry from Henry Stanley's grand publicity campaign to find a man who was not lost:

Have I named one single river? Have I claimed one
single acre?

Have I kept one single nugget - (barring samples)?

¹⁰¹ J Paton Boyd, *Moonlight: New Zealand's Pre-eminent Gold Prospector*, Murchison Historical and Museum Society, Murchison, New Zealand, 1971, p.23; Rudyard Kipling, 'The Explorer', (1898), *Collected Verse of Rudyard Kipling*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1912, pp.21-6

¹⁰² 'Discovery of Tin in Tasmania: Presentation to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 9 February 1878

No, not I!

Because my price was paid me ten times over by my

Maker.

But you wouldn't understand it. You go up and

occupy.¹⁰³

What is an 'explorer'? Driver, in his *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, defines exploration as

a particular kind of travel associated with the sight of new landscapes, people, plants and animals. To lay eyes upon a lake, a peak, a species, for the first time, was the dream of every aspiring explorer.¹⁰⁴

Is it enough simply to find something? Unless the explorer is a hermit looking for a home, publicity is needed to make the discovery useful and the discoverer famous. For the purposes of his *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Binks defines an explorer as

one who has penetrated new country and who has left an accessible record of the area he has visited such as a report to the Survey Department, newspaper article or some other account which was available to others going into that part of the country.¹⁰⁵

Australia's 'last explorer', Ernest Giles,¹⁰⁶ still wanted to be seen as a knight errant. He called his memoir

the Romance of Exploration; the romance is in the chivalry of the achievement of difficult and dangerous if not almost impossible, tasks....An explorer is an explorer from love, and it is nature, not art, that makes him so.¹⁰⁷

The excitement of the discovery, love of the landscape and of the outdoor life, were motivating factors not only for Giles, but also for Tasmanian prospectors Paddy Hartnett, Frank Long and James Smith.

¹⁰³ Kipling, 'The Explorer', pp.21-6

¹⁰⁴ Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, p.9

¹⁰⁵ Binks, *Explorers*, p.5

¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Dutton, *Australia's Last Explorer: Ernest Giles*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1874, p.20

The term 'explorer' has had wide application in Tasmania, an island which, while spectacularly wild, by dint of its physical size has never much bothered the historian who deals in 'heroics' on the scale of such as Livingstone. Some books about Australian exploration do not even mention Tasmania: most British explorers of note at least had the common sense to go somewhere big. Although convicts certainly starved to death trying to cross Tasmania, that hardly qualified them to stand with the epic saga of Burke and Wills crossing the Australian mainland - and the subsequent expedition from Hobart to Macquarie Harbour by Sir John Franklin and his wife, perched in a sedan chair (oddly anticipating Livingstone's final travels, hoisted on the shoulders of his bodyguards¹⁰⁸), along a track cut earlier by James Calder, was barely exploration by any standards.

Despite R M Johnston's tales of the horizontal scrub (see Introduction), no Tasmanian explorer disappeared in the wilds like Ludwig Leichardt. Only the original scrub climber Henry Hellyer, flawed by aesthetic judgement (when practical was needed) and a sensitive temperament, and Aboriginal 'conciliator' George Robinson, have much advanced the historian's pulse. Some prospectors, including James Smith,¹⁰⁹ W R Bell,¹¹⁰ George Renison Bell,¹¹¹ S B Emmett¹¹² and T B Moore,¹¹³ described their work as exploration, even though, strictly speaking, they usually marched in the footsteps of others untrained or uninterested in geology. When Smith prospected at Mount Bischoff in 1871, he followed not only one of Hellyer's maps, but the Burgess track cut seven years earlier, and when he ascended the mountain he would have seen James Sprent's trigonometrical survey station on its summit.¹¹⁴ It is clear that Hellyer in particular could rightly claim some of the credit accorded Smith the legendary explorer. Hellyer, surely, had more often than Smith forced his way

¹⁰⁷ Ray Ericksen, *Ernest Giles: Explorer and Traveller, 1835-1897*, Hesperian, Carlisle, Western Australia, 1997, pp.48-9

¹⁰⁸ Cecil Northcott, *David Livingstone: His Triumph, Decline and Fall*, Lutterworth, Guildford, United Kingdom, 1973, p.125

¹⁰⁹ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹¹⁰ Prospectus of the No 1 South Heazlewood Prospecting Company, *Examiner* 25 April 1888; Waratah, in 'Waratah and Whyte River', *Examiner* 17 January 1891, also refers to W R Bell as an explorer.

¹¹¹ George Renison Bell diary entry 11 April 1880 (Judy Cole)

¹¹² S B Emmett memoir, RS131/16 (Royal Society collection, University of Tasmania Archive)

¹¹³ Binks, *Explorers*, p.230

through trackless scrub, where no living thing was seen [and passed]
days and weeks and months in lonely bush through which the sun's rays
scarcely pierced.¹¹⁵

'Daylight was completely shut out,' Hellyer wrote of his 1827 trip. 'We were not able to force our way on five hundred yards in an hour in some of these horrid scrubs.'¹¹⁶ Another earlier description that resonates in the Vagabond's version of the Smith legend is that Hellyer had literally sat or stood shivering over a campfire through long, dreary nights, that is, when he could keep a fire going.¹¹⁷ While most of Hellyer's accounts of expeditions were unpublished, the report of the 1827 trip was published in 1832, and other Van Diemen's Land Company reports in 1861, giving Smith's biographers useful background reading.

According to Binks's definition, Smith and T B Moore barely qualify as explorers, and Fred Smithies, the twentieth-century Launceston bushwalker, climber, photographer and conservationist who has sometimes been called an 'explorer', is disqualified altogether.¹¹⁸ George Robinson, a committed diarist and the first white man to see many areas of Tasmania, however, also some piners, and prospectors such as W R Bell, are omitted by Binks's definition, because their accounts of their journeys were not made public contemporaneously, and therefore did not advance contemporary knowledge or benefit other contemporary bushmen and pioneers. (Binks's definition raises an interesting dilemma in the case of the Macquarie Harbour absconder Alexander Pearce, whose account of his escape was filed away and forgotten but which otherwise, conceivably, may have raised eating one's party as a survival technique for explorers.¹¹⁹)

¹¹⁴ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹¹⁵ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', Age 27 October 1894, p.11

¹¹⁶ Henry Hellyer, 'Report of Mr Henry Hellyer, Dated Circular Head, 13th March, 1827', in James Bischoff, *Sketch of the History of Van Diemen's Land*, John Richardson, London, 1832, p.167

¹¹⁷ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff'

¹¹⁸ J G Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian: Frederick Smithies, O B E: Explorer, Mountaineer, Photographer*, Regal, Launceston, undated, pp.47-53. See Ann G Smith, 'Frederick Smithies (1885-1979)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, p.677.

¹¹⁹ See Dan Sprod, *Alexander Pearce of Macquarie Harbour*, Cat and Fiddle, Hobart, 1977.

The 'prospector hero'

If an event was to mark the introduction of mineral prospecting to the Australian explorer's list of duties, it should, logically, be the 1851 gold rushes. Yet it happened slowly. Gold-digging, the lust for wealth, was not a gentleman's profession - and only a gentleman could finance or obtain sponsorship for a long expedition. (As late as 1898 the gentleman prospector David Carnegie was at pains to assure readers of his autobiography that the prospector 'is often inspired by some higher feeling than the mere "lust of gold".'¹²⁰) Of course from 1851 onwards prospectors mounted gold searches constantly, many of them in secrecy, but so long as the puzzles of central Australia remained unsettled minerals would be subordinate to geography and science on those mass migrations recognised as 'exploration'.

John McDouall Stuart included skilled gold prospectors in his exploratory parties in central Australia from 1858 to 1860. His primary objectives, however, remained to settle the question of Australia's fabled inland sea and to find pastoral land.¹²¹ It is reasonable to wonder, though, whether prospectors were Stuart's model when he recognised that a small 'flying' party could achieve more faster than the traditional, lumbering 'self-provisioning army'.¹²²

The 'heroic days' of Australian exploration ended with John Forrest and Ernest Giles in the mid 1870s.¹²³ Giles, a former gold digger, had 'gold and golcondas of gems' on his exploratory menu, along with

¹²⁰ David W Carnegie, *Spinifex and Sand*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1973 (originally published 1898), p.ix

¹²¹ Ian Mudie, *The Heroic Journeys of John McDouall Stuart*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1968, pp.51-55, 88-9, 128-9

¹²² *ibid*, p.7

¹²³ F K Crowley, *Forrest 1847-1918: vol. 1, 1847-91: Apprenticeship to Premiership*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1971, p.58

snowy mountains, an inland sea, ancient river, and palmy plain...races
of new kinds of men inhabiting a new and odorous land...a new flora
and a new fauna...¹²⁴

Yet Giles passed through what later became the fabulous Coolgardie goldfield without recognising it; and Forrest fared no better on the site of the future Mount Margaret goldfield.¹²⁵ Carnegie in 1896 perhaps represents the perfect fusion of gold and land exploration, having sought a stock route from the Kimberley to Coolgardie while prospecting that line for minerals, but even then he often crossed the paths of predecessors.¹²⁶

It was in the late 1870s, however, soon after Giles and Forrest retired from the field, that James Smith became probably Australia's first 'prospector hero'. This signified that, perhaps in the absence of new geographical challenges and the grand 'heroism' these invoked, mineral prospectors could now aspire to the mantle of the explorer and meet Australia's need of heroic exemplars. Smith's 'saviour' status was probably the clincher. No 'prospector hero' who followed Smith - not Charles Rasp of Broken Hill fame, nor Paddy Hannan of Kalgoorlie - was seen to have 'saved' his colony the way Smith did by wresting Tasmania from its economic malaise. A big opportunity had existed for an Australian 'prospector hero', if not a saviour, with the sparking of the New South Wales gold rushes in 1851, but the comfortably proportioned Edward Hargraves hardly seemed the part and the palm of first discoverer was rightly contested. Hargraves was not an explorer by any definition of the term, and it is hard to imagine his guided horseback jaunt into the hills near Bathurst joining the pantheon of heroic British deeds, as Smith's prospecting career later did, under any circumstances.¹²⁷

Ken Inglis has outlined Australia's struggle to find heroes before 1870, its epic poets having little bloodshed to work with (Aboriginal blood did not count).¹²⁸ Through the British imperial Union Jack, and its great bearers such as Wellington, Nelson and the Light Brigade, Australia had fought and bled vicariously by the bucket-load, but it

¹²⁴ Ericksen, *Ernest Giles*, p.49

¹²⁵ Crowley, *Forrest 1847-1918: vol. 1, 1847-91*, p.37

¹²⁶ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.179

¹²⁷ *ibid*, pp.13-8

needed to flex its own national identity.¹²⁹ America's great heroes - George Washington, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln - were likewise associated with war.¹³⁰ Although William Wentworth deplored the lack of opportunity for Australian self-sacrifice,¹³¹ he remained on the short-list of potential substitutes:

Australians who wanted heroes had to choose between Cook the remote discoverer, Wentworth the flawed patriot, the grim explorers of the interior, the disreputable outlaws of the bush, the makers of the Eureka Stockade and the eight-hour day, and the other men of such reputation as could be nurtured within the bounds of colonial settlement and experience.¹³²

By the advent of Smith's regular prospecting career in 1859, most of Australia's great interior expeditions - including those of John Oxley, Allan Cunningham, Edward John Eyre, Charles Sturt and Edmund Kennedy - were in the past, although the puzzle of Leichardt's disappearance in 1848 still attracted followers.¹³³ The race was on to cross the mainland from south to north, encouraged by a £2,000 reward offered by the South Australian government. After John McDouall Stuart's party turned back short of the mark in June 1860, Robert O'Hara Burke and William John Wills wrote probably the most 'heroic' page of Australian exploratory history, by dying of starvation near Coopers Creek in April 1861 while completing the return leg of their successful mission. As with James Cook, Sir John Franklin and imperial explorers of later years, martyrdom galvanised their memory, the melancholy irony of Burke and Wills' *success* only adding to their glory.¹³⁴

Allusions to Burke and Wills must have made irresistible copy, but the rainforests and river valleys Smith plunged through were far removed from the scorching deserts, dust and immense camel treks endured by that tragic pair (and later to be endured by

¹²⁸ Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, pp.283-319

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p.319

¹³⁰ *ibid*, p.318

¹³¹ cited by Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, p.296

¹³² Inglis, *Australian Colonists*, p.319

¹³³ *ibid*, p.298

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p.304

numerous gold prospectors).¹³⁵ David Livingstone, on the other hand, had recently ducked back into the African jungle, from which he had famously emerged in 1857. At a time when the Sepoy Rebellion in India, war at the Crimea and in China had darkened imperial interests, the missionary with the heroically halting English, lion attack scars and 'marching style' prose¹³⁶ (in his first memoir, *Missionary Travels*) shone over Victorian Britain, which, according to Northcott, had

[taken] him to its heart because he embodied all the ingredients of heroism that it idealized - rugged simplicity, a victory against odds, dedication to a cause, plus a patina of piety that stirred the emotions.¹³⁷

Although Smith would seem at a glance to be *Bulletin* proprietor J F Archibald's archetypal reader, the 'lone hand' - 'the very salt of the Australian people, the educated, independent mining prospector'¹³⁸ - the Philosopher does not fit the stereotype of the Australian bushman, the anti-authoritarian rough diamond for whom mateship is paramount:

a practical man, rough and ready in his manners, and quick to decry affectation....He is a great improviser...willing to 'have a go' at anything, but...content with a task done in a way which is 'near enough'. Though capable of great exertion in an emergency, he normally feels no impulse to work hard....He swears hard and consistently, gambles heavily and often, and drinks deeply on occasion....He is usually taciturn...stoical...and sceptical about the value of religion, and of intellectual and cultural pursuits generally. He believes that Jack is not only as good as his master, but...probably a good deal better, and so he is a great 'knocker' of eminent people...He is a fiercely independent

¹³⁵ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.168

¹³⁶ Northcott, *David Livingstone*, p.18

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p.50

¹³⁸ cited by Geoffrey Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: a Cultural History*, William Heinemann, Richmond, Victoria, 1987, p.60

person who hates officiousness and authority...Yet he is very hospitable
and, above all, will stick to his mates through thick and thin...¹³⁹

Smith was from an earlier mould: he was a Victorian hero, the embodiment of the British values outlined above in Livingstone's case, and it was in those terms that his image was fixed during his lifetime.

Smith's response to nature

Richard Flanagan has explained how European explorers described south-western Tasmania in terms of the 'Arcadian concept', which served to impose a European pastoral idyll onto the landscape, and in terms of Romanticism, which was 'pre-occupied with the relationship between nature and the individual...'¹⁴⁰ There is evidence of both at work in the earliest European exploration of the north-west interior in the late 1820s. The Van Diemen's Land Company's Henry Hellyer named features of the Surrey Hills after English country estates; while another of its surveyors, Joseph Fossey, called the grassy, glacial Vale of Belvoir after a hunting domain in Leicestershire, aware, perhaps, that the valley he named was fired and hunted by the Aborigines.¹⁴¹

The upper Forth River gorge, however, defied such attempts at civilisation. Hellyer was awe-struck by the 'stupendous' and 'hideous' gates, and the 'mighty torrent' that crashed through them, clearly having seen no equal in Britain.¹⁴² His confused report, which unwittingly established the legend of a 'petrifying' waterfall on the Forth, is consistent with those of Joseph Calder and others about the south-west region:

Words such as gloomy, sterile, awful, waste, vile, stern, forboding and
terrible occur with regular monotony in all the early explorers' accounts.

Not that they were dogmatic in condemning the country they passed

¹³⁹ Russel Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2nd edn., 1966 (originally published 1958), p.1

¹⁴⁰ Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country*, Greenhouse, Richmond, Victoria, 1985, pp.63-5

¹⁴¹ See Binks, *Explorers*, p.58 and following.

through - very often they were extravagant in their praise; but always underpinning such praise was the notion that the area was a frightening wasteland.¹⁴³

James Calder's 'thick, dark strokes of Romantic gloom and terror'¹⁴⁴ extended to his reports about the 'western forests', that is, those of the north-west as viewed from convenient lookouts such as Mount Roland. As a surveyor on a mission to find land to be settled, Calder is at once frightened by the size of the forest, delighted by its lushness and, then again, appalled by the task of clearing it in the name of settlement:

The intelligent traveller passing through these gloomy wastes will always find abundance to admire, even where there is so much to condemn; and if he experience weariness and distress in these abodes of primeval solitude, he will not be without pleasing sensations also if he have but a soul to appreciate the beautiful and the grand, which nature has not denied even to those deserted regions.¹⁴⁵

Yet,

were it possible to eradicate them [the forests], how changed would be the condition of Tasmania, and how different her prospects from what they are now! Lands scarcely worth having at present would then be cheap almost at any price and wastes apparently condemned to perpetual neglect and hopeless solitude would then, in truth, give to Tasmania that character for productiveness which we now more often than rightly claim for her.¹⁴⁶

The height and density of the forest suggested 'jungle', a term often used in nineteenth-century descriptions of the north-western or western Tasmanian forests. This idea was magnified by their luxuriance. In British experience, forests of such size and lushness lived only in the accounts of explorers of tropical jungles:

¹⁴² Henry Hellyer, 'A Description of the Forth's Gateway', *Ross's Almanack*, 1832

¹⁴³ Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty*, p.66

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.67

¹⁴⁵ James Erskine Calder, *Topographical Sketches of Tasmania 1845 and 1847*, Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide, 1987, p.25

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p.24

Another remarkable circumstance connected with our forests is the appearance of tropical plants amongst them [the 'monstrous' trees], often flourishing at elevations where the temperature must be very low. Beside the gigantic fern trees there is another tree less known (and apparently altogether out of its latitude), namely a superb species of the palm tree which occasionally reaches the height of thirty feet...¹⁴⁷

No wonder then that occasionally reporters of Smith's travels would make a 'Freudian slip' which gave away their reference points: the 'oppressive heat' he had to endure; and his 'thirst', most unusual privations in Tasmanian rainforest.¹⁴⁸ While such accounts are generally in the Romantic tradition, there is probably a specific link to the reports of African explorers, particularly, in later years, Livingstone. The Scot's earliest memoir, *Missionary Travels in South Africa* (1857), is notable for his refusal to try to come to terms with the forest he repeatedly dismisses as 'gloomy' and 'lifeless'. He recalls the relief of seeing the ocean 'after the monotony of the lifeless, flat, and gloomy forest'.¹⁴⁹

A flat, lifeless African forest? Henry Stanley's African forest teems with tormentors. Tim Jeal has pointed out that Livingstone's descriptive passages depended upon his state of mind and health when he wrote them, how entering a forest when he was ill would invoke a 'condemnatory tone'.¹⁵⁰ Bites, stings, cuts and infection would have been a constant reminder of the life surrounding Livingstone.

The forests Smith entered were, like those of Livingstone's *Missionary Tales*, reported as 'inhospitable',¹⁵¹ 'dismal',¹⁵² 'abominable',¹⁵³ 'dreary',¹⁵⁴ and, of course, 'very gloomy'.¹⁵⁵ Even 'the products of the vegetable kingdom which in other places yielded

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p.23

¹⁴⁸ Thomas Jones, 'Through Tasmania', *Mercury* 29 March 1884; J S, *In Tasman's Land*, p.18

¹⁴⁹ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels in South Africa*, new edn., John Murray, London, 1899 (originally published 1857), p.317

¹⁵⁰ Tim Jeal, *Livingstone*, Heinemann, London, 1973, p.145

¹⁵¹ James Smith obituary, *Daily Telegraph* 19 June 1897

¹⁵² *ibid*

¹⁵³ *Australian Mining Standard*, Special Edition 1 July 1898, p.41

¹⁵⁴ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', *Age* 27 October 1894, p.11

¹⁵⁵ A Geoffrey Horner, 'Philosopher Smith', *Walkabout* 1 December 1940, p.30

food for man, were wanting here.¹⁵⁶ In similar fashion to Livingstone, the earlier Calder describes the north-western Tasmanian forests as

one apparently boundless ocean of forests - an interminable desert of trees as stern and dusky-looking as if it had rained nothing but soot on them through all time.¹⁵⁷

An 'ocean of forests' and a 'desert of trees'. Despite the extraordinary lushness of the forests and the apparently rich soil beneath which nurtured them, Calder and later writers often referred to them as 'infertile'.¹⁵⁸ As Livingstone's 'gloom' was a metaphor for Africa's spiritual degradation,¹⁵⁹ so 'lifeless' and 'infertile' translate as 'lacking in sustenance for the explorer', a charge which was a staple of the reputation of the Gordon River country in particular, which had starved absconding convicts and made cannibals of others. 'We saw no animal after we crossed the river, not even a bird,' George Anderson reported of a trip south of the Arthur River with Emmett.¹⁶⁰ Charles Gould referred to Tasmania's 'unsettled wastelands' or 'Western Country' as being

entirely devoid of the numerous species of garrulous and gay-plumaged birds...though these abundantly enliven the eastern districts...¹⁶¹

Smith used the word 'gloom' himself to describe the Mount Bischoff forest in which he found the tin and which the surveyors battled in order to establish his mining leases,¹⁶² and his most vivid descriptions of nature were in the Romantic mould.

Many Tasmanian bushmen of this era burned off grasslands in spring (when the grass was dry but the roots were wet, so that the plant was not destroyed) as a regenerative measure which would attract game to be hunted or feed for their stock. They cut timber when it was needed for construction but generally minimised their impact upon the bush. The strange exception to this rule was the commonly-held belief that firing any country was beneficial - and prospectors seem to have been the worst

¹⁵⁶ James Smith obituary, *Daily Telegraph* 19 June 1897

¹⁵⁷ Calder, *Topographical Sketches*, p.30

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, p.38

¹⁵⁹ Jeal, *Livingstone*, p.145

¹⁶⁰ George Anderson, 'The Hellyer Country', *Examiner* 2 March 1863

¹⁶¹ Charles Gould, *Mythical Monsters*, W H Allen, London, 1886, p.43

¹⁶² Smith notes, 'Exploring, NS234/14/3 (AOT)

offenders.¹⁶³ The likes of Paddy Hartnett and S B Emmett would burn off the land simply to expedite prospecting: 'It has been windy and rough all day and we have started a lot of fires that are now doing good work scouring the country.'¹⁶⁴ S B Emmett records burning off the vicinity of the 'Blue-Peaked Hill' (the Milkshake Hills) south of the Arthur, in preparation for the gold-seeking visit of Edward Hargraves (little realising that he would be required, additionally, to spend a week cutting a bridal track so that Hargraves could ride to the spot). Countless thousands of hectares of scrub and buttongrass were destroyed in a few days:

On Sunday...the day being warm, with a strong S W wind, the flames spread so rapidly to the right and left that no language could describe the effect. The heat was so great that the force of the wind became deadened, and whirlwinds ran along the burning edge of the fire, with a noise nearly equal to loud thunder, when the adjacent tea-tree scrub appeared to collapse to the devouring element.¹⁶⁵

Although Smith recalls a narrow escape from fire in his boyhood adventures along the Tamar,¹⁶⁶ there is no evidence that he burned off land ahead of him on prospecting expeditions. Had he done so in the manner of Emmett, huge tracts of land would have been fired and the damage would have been documented by later bushmen. Smith appreciated the bush intrinsically, but he was pragmatic about it, believing that the earth's natural resources were God-given for man's benefit.¹⁶⁷ He was very mindful of timber conservation, although the concern expressed in his letter of that name is for the effect on climate and timber as a building resource:

Too little attention has been paid to timber conservation on the North West Coast. Most pioneer framers have been remiss in this respect. On thousands of acres in different parts hardly a timber tree or a shade tree

¹⁶³ C J Binks deals with the practice of burning off and other Tasmanian responses to the landscape in an unpublished manuscript *Hills of the West Wind: Reflections on the Tasmanian Landscape*, especially p.178 and following.

¹⁶⁴ 'Diary: E W Clarke', 23 November 1910. This diary of a trip made by Ted Clarke and Paddy Hartnett from Howells Plains to Lake St Clair is held by Nell Williams, Hobart.

¹⁶⁵ S B Emmett, 'The North-West Country', *Examiner* 14 February 1865, p.2

¹⁶⁶ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

has escaped the ringing or burning off process. Wherever forest is seen within a few miles of the seaboard it is with little exception a sign that the land where it exists is too poor to tempt the farmer to clear it for cultivation.¹⁶⁸

Smith blamed the clearing of forest for a reduction in local rainfall, warned farmers to include poor land with the rich in order to secure an adequate local timber supply, and cautioned that slow-growing trees usually possessed 'more strength and durability' than the faster grower. Presumably, however, the familiar ambience of bush life, from the smoky comfort of campfire tucker, to the smell of rain on eucalypt leaves and the call of the currawong, also had hold of Smith's spirit, although, oddly perhaps, he wrote less about the bush than did other great Tasmanian bushmen who were newspaper correspondents. There is no existing Smith equivalent, for instance, of Moore's epiphany on Frenchmans Cap:

No pretty houses, cultivated farms, towns or the work of man meet the delighted eyes; everything is wild in its natural beauty....A love of nature gazing on this scene would exclaim with Tom Moore 'If there be an Elysium on earth it is this.'¹⁶⁹

Nor did Smith pen a description, as Moore,¹⁷⁰ Emmett¹⁷¹ and George Renison Bell¹⁷² did, of the daily labours of bush life, or the rigours of exploration as Nathaniel Kentish¹⁷³ did so enthusiastically. There are no travel reports of the flavour of James Calder's,¹⁷⁴ full of hideous defiles and picaresque backwoodsmen, as entertaining as some of the old stockmen Smith met must have been. Why did a man who expressed so much that was dear to him neglect the realm in which so much of his physical and

¹⁶⁷ 'Discovery of Tin in Tasmania: Presentation to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 9 February 1878

¹⁶⁸ 'Timber Conservation', 6 September 1893, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁶⁹ T B Moore, 'Ascent of Frenchmans Cap', *Mercury* 14 April 1887

¹⁷⁰ T B Moore diary 4 June 1879; cited in McShane, *T B Moore*, pp.39-40

¹⁷¹ S B Emmett, 'The River Hellyer', *Examiner* 25 May 1866; 'Exploration of the Arthur', *Examiner* 16 July 1867, p.3

¹⁷² G R B (George Renison Bell), 'Another Piece of Wellington', 1906 newspaper story among George Renison Bell papers (Bell papers)

¹⁷³ Nathaniel Lipscomb Kentish, 'Exploration', in *Work in the Bush, Thoughts in the Bush, and Life in the Bush, of Van Diemen's Land, with Their Results*, George Rolwegen, Hobart, 1846

spiritual life was invested? It was left to Charles Gould and Edwin Cummings to recall the camaraderie of Smith's campfire, dreaming of becoming wealthy men on a mineral show up the Leven River while the blackfish sizzled.¹⁷⁵

The most likely explanation for this is not so much a case of neglect as of priority: Smith wrote about what mattered most to him, which was generally love of God and moral duty. For much of his life, at least, he enjoyed discussing his bush exploration publicly and privately.¹⁷⁶ (Fenton wished Smith would write his autobiography in order to do his achievements justice, but by that time, in 1891, modesty had prevailed upon Smith after repeated requests for reminiscences of his early days.¹⁷⁷) Henry Button records tantalisingly,

Many a time he has narrated to me some of his adventures, and I simply looked at him in amazement, wondering how any human being could have gone through what he did and lived to tell the tale.¹⁷⁸

Smith's newspaper stories of the early 1860s make his interest in flora and fauna (his thylacine stories, for example) very clear. His notes, letters and verse suggest that, while its hazards were contained, he found the bush fascinating and liberating, as he had on his boyhood jaunts along the Tamar. He recalled witnessing some powerful expressions of nature on the upper Forth system. A storm sent

wild angry looming clouds that floated overhead...and discharged at every alternate [sic] broad sheets of electric flame which elumed [sic] the rugged and toppling crags and dark foliage of the hills with a lurid glare and flashed with awful brightness on the foaming waters that roared past our encampment.¹⁷⁹

A telescope allowed him to study a picturesque clash of vapours on distant Winterbrook Falls, which looked

¹⁷⁴ Calder, *Topographical Sketches*

¹⁷⁵ Charles Gould to Smith 20 September 1880, no. 362, NS234/3/9; Edwin Cummings to Smith 26 May 1882, no. 170, NS234/3/11 (AOT)

¹⁷⁶ for example, 'River Forth', *Examiner*, 23 February 1864, p.3

¹⁷⁷ James Fenton, *Bush Life*, p.167. In 1891 both James Backhouse Walker (27 April) and Henry Button (12 October) asked Smith to write about his bush experiences - to no avail (NS234/3/19 [AOT]).

¹⁷⁸ Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p.300

truly magnificent, as they appeared in long white quivering lines, and flashed ever and anon in the bright sunbeams which broke at frequent intervals through dark clouds of mist that were passing slowly over the mountain.¹⁸⁰

'To the River Forth' describes the uplifting, spiritual experience of a clear evening on its banks:

I've lingered by thy stream
When the moonbeams silvered thy breast
Then any soul with wondrous thought was blest
My spirit in its day could never rest,
But upward, upward where the stars do gleam
In all their purity and calm serene
It rose from out my breast...¹⁸¹

Smith draws a joyous analogy in this poem between the river waters rushing to the sea and the rush of human souls to God's eternal love, expressing the idea of omniscience. His earlier poem about the other prominent river in his life, the Tamar ('Come for a Stroll to the Cataract'), by contrast, has a Romantic oneness with nature:

And now this is the spot meditations will choose
When the wattle's sweet colour shall scent
the mild gale
To wander alone and delightfully muse
As scanning the beauties of mountain and
vale.¹⁸²

While Smith's papers suggest a reverence for nature, its spiritual significance is not as clear as in, for instance, the life of one of his contemporaries, Henry Judd, another prospector whose career had much in common with Smith's. Judd's family settled in the bush at Franklin on the Huon River in 1843, ten years before Smith

¹⁷⁹ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹⁸⁰ 'The Black Bluff', *Examiner* 3 June 1862, p.5. Winterbrook Falls plunge down the eastern cliffs of Black Bluff.

¹⁸¹ *Examiner* 13 June 1872, p. 3

became one of the Forth pioneers. Both were teetotaling Congregationalists with a love of exploring and the bush, pioneer prospectors in their respective regions. Judd claimed to have made the first discovery of silver in south-western Tasmania, not long after Smith's great tin find. His writing takes a similar pleasure in nature to Smith's. His description of a waterfall on the side of Mount Ann is as striking as Smith's observation of Winterbrook Falls:

Upon the southern side there is a stream of water that flows over a ledge of rock upon the top of the mount into space. So very high is it that it is thrashed into vapour before it can get to the earth, and has the appearance of a floss of silk floating about in the air by the change of wind.¹⁸³

Yet Judd also found proof of the existence of God in nature:

In these places of solitude the mind begins to search for Nature's hidden laws, so as to discover the secrets therein, to build up the glories of man in the image of God who created him.¹⁸⁴

In *The Dark Lantern*, Judd explains his conviction that 'minerals are placed by the Creator to control all our natural laws.'¹⁸⁵ Judd's experiences as a prospector were the basis of a system of scientific and spiritual belief: plants, animals and the atmosphere all took their colour from minerals,¹⁸⁶ which also, by their magnetic effect, controlled the planetary systems, theories probably influenced by the work of Albert Magnus and Johannes Kepler.¹⁸⁷ Minerals were thus an integral element in God's creation.

Despite Hainsworth's reverence for Hugh Miller, it is certain that both Smith and he regarded Darwin's theory of evolution as an unthreatening, perhaps even enlightened, guidebook to the workings of God's kingdom. As discussed earlier, even Miller had shifted stance in order to reconcile the six days of creation with theories of

¹⁸² *Examiner* 14 December 1858

¹⁸³ Henry Judd, *The Dark Lantern; or, Hidden Side of Nature*, 1896, p.31

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.5

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*, pp.5-7

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p.7. See also Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore: an Illustrated Composition and Documentary Compilation With Emphasis on the Spirit and History of Mines*, Portland, Oregon, 1970, p.799 and following.

geological change. In contrast to Smith, Hainsworth frequently submitted effusions about local geology to the *Examiner* newspaper,¹⁸⁸ and it is revealing that these contain not one reference to the Miller notion of fossils and geological formations being God's architecture, the indelible mark of the creator. Hainsworth welcomed intellectual challenge:

Instance my predilection for the Science of Geology - a science which has done more towards uprooting old notions - turning topsy turvey [sic] theological opinions and compelling enlightened Christians to read the Bible in a modified language than all the other sciences put together.¹⁸⁹

Hainsworth had 'moved on', and so, surely, had his correspondent at the Forth. Their mutual oracle, W B Clarke, probably influenced that movement. The Anglican minister and geologist was, of course, a firm believer in geological change, and he marvelled at Darwin's *Origin of Species*.¹⁹⁰ Clarke retained, however, 'an undiminished faith in the guiding hand in human affairs of an ever-present God'.¹⁹¹

Two leading American scientists provide an interesting Congregationalist response to Darwinism. Asa Gray, professor of botany at Harvard University, was the main American supporter of Darwin's treatise. A fellow Congregationalist and Harvard lecturer, the naturalist Louis Agassiz, was, conversely, Darwinism's chief opponent.¹⁹² Who was right or wrong is not the point: their decision to debate the issue publicly says more about the nature of their faith than the opinions they expressed. Both realised that

science and religion, if they were to flourish, must be open to discussion, revision, and renewed appreciation. God is Absolute; but no system or person is.¹⁹³

Judd, who foresaw the development of the astronomical telescope,¹⁹⁴ as late as 1896 argued against Darwinism because of the absence of a 'missing link between

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, 'A Ride from Table Cape to Emu Bay', *Examiner* 11 July 1868, p.3; and 'A Stroll on Table Cape Beach', *Examiner* 5 September 1868.

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 12 February 1859, no. 63, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

¹⁹⁰ Elena Grainger, *The Remarkable Reverend Clarke: the Life and Times of the Father of Australian Geology*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1982, p.230

¹⁹¹ *ibid*, p.12

¹⁹² C George Fry and Jon Paul Fry, *Congregationalists and Evolution: Asa Gray and Louis Agassiz*, University Press of America, Lanham, Maryland, 1989, pp. 6-11 and 19

animals and man'¹⁹⁵ - but he did so after decades of study. *The Dark Lantern* is a 35-page exploration of how, as Judd sees it, God's guiding hand operates his natural kingdom. It would be very surprising if Smith, the 'Philosopher', an empirical amateur scientist on the same 'high road to learning' as contemporary American Congregationalists,¹⁹⁶ who studied geology, both in books and in the field; who named his own phrenological bump; and tested the biting apparatus of snakes, had not at least examined the tenets of evolution. Perhaps, like Gray, Smith regarded nature as a 'sanctuary',¹⁹⁷ and, like Judd, he had found that

in these places of solitude the mind begins to search for nature's hidden laws, so as to discover the secrets therein, to build up the glories of man in the image of God who created him.¹⁹⁸

Certainly nature seemed to invigorate Smith. On trips over Black Bluff he discovered the perfume of the lemonthyme (*Boronia citriadora*), plus the King Billy (*Athrotaxis selaginoides*) and pencil (*Athrotaxis cupressoides*) pines and the ravine of Golden Cliff Gorge,¹⁹⁹ into which he believed a 'destroying visitation' had flung down a forest.²⁰⁰ Although Smith killed thylacines on sight because he saw these scavengers as a threat to his survival, he would have done so with regret. When he discovered that the 'tiger' he killed at the Lea River was a mother with four kittens in her pouch, he considered keeping them as 'specimens of animated nature', only to find they could not digest the rough food at his disposal.²⁰¹ What a pity Smith cannot be consulted today. The recent news that the probably extinct thylacine, deceptively common in his day, may soon be genetically re-created, would surely contain so many conflicting sentiments for the famously meditative Philosopher that he might never reach an assured response.

In the late 1860s Smith sent plant specimens and a shipment of living lobsters to the amateur botanist Ronald Gunn, the crustaceans, unfortunately, failing to survive the

¹⁹³ *ibid*, p.19

¹⁹⁴ Judd, *The Dark Lantern*, p.23

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, p.21

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁹⁸ Judd, p.5

¹⁹⁹ J S (James Smith), 'The Black Bluff', *Examiner* 3 June 1862, p. 5

²⁰⁰ *ibid*

trip.²⁰² In 1867, like Moore, Emmett and many others, he wrote offering to collect botanical specimens for Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller, government botanist of Victoria.²⁰³ (Smith had also asked Mueller about the 'culinary usefulness' of a *Boronia pinnata* specimen he had included, suggesting the interest in homeopathy which became evident in later years.) The correspondence with Gunn and especially Mueller, whose reputation as a 'scientific explorer'²⁰⁴ was already well established, must have encouraged Smith's own 'exploration' work. 'If this can be done by you as an amateurs [sic] occupation, I shall be very glad to receive any you may not think common', Mueller responded,

and although the zealous searches of my friend Ronald Gunn leave but little chance for actual novelty, you are still certain to have always in any select series of plant a good percentage of species new for locality.

Among mosses you might actually discover new kinds for science.²⁰⁵

In return for forwarding native seeds to the botanist, Smith received exotic ones, some of which he passed on to his fellow enthusiasts George Anderson and William Gibson. Smith's letters to Mueller about the habitat of the silver wattle show that he observed nature closely during his prospecting expeditions:

I believe the silver wattle seldom grows at a greater altitude than this [1500 feet] in Tasmania. I know of one instance however of silver wattle at about the altitude of the Vale of Belvoir which Strzelecki places at 2930 English feet. The silver wattle consisting of only a few trees is on the northern side of a hill that rises from the south margin of the River Lea and within about the third of a mile of the junction of that river with

²⁰¹ J S (James Smith), 'Tasmanian Tigers', *Examiner* 22 November, 1862, p.2

²⁰² R C Gunn to Smith 22 September 1866, no. 83; and 10 June 1867, no. 93, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁰³ Baron von Mueller to Smith 14 August 1867, no. 97; E B Heyne to Smith 1 November 1867, no. 100, NS234/3/1 (AOT). As director of the Botanical Gardens in Melbourne, Mueller exchanged seeds and plants with botanists throughout the Australian colonies. He 'emphasized the commercial value of the acacia for its wood, tannin and gum, and the Australian manna for its saccharine content.' (Deirdre Morris, 'Baron Sir Ferdinand Jakob Heinrich von Mueller (1825-96)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp.306-8)

²⁰⁴ Home, Rod, 'Science as a German Export to Nineteenth Century Australia', *Working Papers in Australian Studies*, no. 104, London, 1995, p.10

the Fall River. The trees are sheltered by rising ground and by scrub from the south and south-west winds...I several times saw these trees between the years 59 and '72 [sic]. They were healthy in appearance but slow of growth. The tallest of them did not, I think, exceed 40'.²⁰⁶

The silver wattles described were a short distance from some quartz reefs he revisited periodically. In 1895 he rechecked them and found others growing around Middlesex at a height of about 900 metres.²⁰⁷

The bush held another interest for Smith. The yarns of old stockmen and the relics of the early days he noted on his bush expeditions added to his store of northern Tasmanian folklore, supplementing that gained when the last tribal Aborigines and bushrangers roamed the Tamar verges during his childhood. Through the generation of his elders (Jonathan Griffiths arrived in the colonies with the second fleet, in 1790) to the end of a studious life in 1897, the potential base of Smith's knowledge spanned almost the entire period from the beginning of European settlement to Australian federation, giving him a remarkably broad canvas. His speculations were not always correct or even verifiable, which qualify them as folklore rather than historical fact. Smith's informants were mostly old stockmen, ex-convicts, such as Richard Lennard, Charles Drury, Jack Francis and Thomas Wood, not the most reliable witnesses, but men whom isolation made garrulous hosts. Through the recollections of Lennard, a Gloucestershire transportee who reputedly hailed from the same Bristol street as the bushranger Samuel Britton,²⁰⁸ Smith linked incidents in his childhood to a murder committed by Aborigines near the Van Diemen's Land Company's Chilton (Surrey Hills) station in 1831.²⁰⁹ Smith believed that the throwing stick, a barbed, metre-long spear, was common to this attack and that on the Griffiths cat (see Chapter 1), suggesting that the same tribe was the perpetrator, since he believed that only the 'Tamar people' used

²⁰⁵ Baron von Mueller to Smith 14 August 1867, no. 97, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁰⁶ Smith to Baron von Mueller 30 July 1894, no. 231, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

²⁰⁷ Smith to Baron von Mueller 27 September 1895, no. 634, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

²⁰⁸ Smith notes 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁰⁹ For an overview of Van Diemen's Land Company interaction with the Aborigines, see Geoff Lennox, 'The Van Diemen's Land Company and the Tasmanian Aborigines: a Reappraisal', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 37, no. 2, 1990, pp.165-208.

this weapon. The William Abrahams story features what appears to be a common motif in the lives of isolated bushmen. Just as heeding a warning in a dream saved Smith's life, premonition of death seems to have functioned as part of a well-developed survival mechanism for stockmen:

When about to start for the Surrey Hills [from the Van Diemen's Land Company holdings at Emu Bay] he [Abrahams] had dreamt that he was attacked and killed by the natives. Having obtained a pair of horse-pistols he slung them on his shoulder by means of a cord attached to their butts. He started with a packhorse and reached the Hampshire Hills the next day. The second day he arrived in the afternoon within about two hundred yards of the present station house [Chilton, near later Guildford] which was then in course of building.

Those working at the house being in full view he considered himself safe. He now hung the pistols on the pack and went aside for a few yards and was speared in the back by natives who had been lying in concealment amongst the logs and trees of the place. His screams brought the workmen to his assistance. At sight of the approaching white men the natives decamped with the utmost celerity. Abrams [sic] was carried to the quarters of the workmen and assiduously attended to. But his wounds were mortal. The spears [Smith generally refers to the weapons as throwing sticks] with which he was wounded were about three feet in length. They were thrown with the points upward but in such away [sic] that they were in a more or less horizontal position with their points in advance when they struck the object aimed at.²¹⁰

Smith does not state whether his informant Lennard witnessed the murder. Both Edward Curr and his subordinate George Robson report that Abrahams was 'speared';²¹¹ Smith or his informant may have mistaken the spear or waddy for the

²¹⁰ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

²¹¹ Edward Curr to the colonial secretary 29 October 1831, CSO1/316/75781/1/1033 (AOT); George Robson to Van Diemen's Land Company, CSO 1/491/10852, pp.224-6 (AOT)

throwing stick. There appears to have been confusion in contemporary accounts of Aboriginal attacks about the shape and nature of the waddy, which was used both as a missile and as a club.²¹² Roth and Calder both claim that the throwing stock was unknown to the native Tasmanians, although it may have been introduced by mainland Australian Aborigines used to 'conciliate' the locals.²¹³ Lennard subsequently or consequently experienced his own 'death dream', hardly surprising if Aboriginal attack was one of his daily concerns:

[He] told me that he also dreamt on one occasion that he was killed by natives and that returning home soon afterwards he saw a waddy lying on the road and that remembering his dream he...[took a detour] instead of going round a turn in the road where Abrahams was killed and thus he thought saved his life. Possibly the waddy was purposely dropped by a native woman.²¹⁴

Searle, the Van Diemen's Land Company's Racecourse (a sheep run in the Surrey Hills) stockmen in 1831, received a similar dream warning, from which he awoke to find hostile Aborigines silently preparing their attack.²¹⁵ Charles Drury, the alcoholic Surrey Hills stockman of the 1870s, when that station was leased by Fields, reported a different kind of telepathic experience. He told Smith that he had once heard his name called in what seemed a supernatural manner.

He recognised the voice as that of a man whom he greatly esteemed. It seemed that his friend had called to him in the most hasty manner possible while very quickly passing though the air. It was said by

²¹² For a summary of accounts of weapons used see H Ling Roth, *Aborigines of Tasmania*, Fullers Bookshop, Hobart, 1968 (originally published 1899), pp.70-1; and James Erskine Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, etc., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*, Henn and Co, Hobart, 1875, pp.34-5.

²¹³ Roth, *Aborigines of Tasmania*, p.82; Calder, *Some Account of the Wars*, pp.34-5.

See also Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p.16.

²¹⁴ Smith notes NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²¹⁵ N J B Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash in Van Diemen's Land*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, 1992, p.28; George Washington Walker's diary entry 19 December 1832, in James Backhouse and Charles Tylor, *The Life and Labours of George Washington Walker*, A W Bennett, London, 1862, p.124.

another that on his return to the station he said that his friend must have died and that it was soon after that Drury thought he heard his voice.²¹⁶

Smith made copious notes about these matters of the spirit and the psyche, without apparently going into print, suggesting that he had not resolved them. Exploration of the 'country of the mind' was in this case, perhaps, more than a metaphor.²¹⁷

The 'Philosopher' reaches fruition

While scrimping and saving in order to mount his prospecting expeditions, Smith survived the agricultural downturn that bankrupted many fellow farmers. The key to this was probably his ability to turn his hand to many labours. Between trips he grew potatoes and apples, split palings, hauled logs, scrubbed out land for other settlers²¹⁸ and collected the road tax.²¹⁹ He also sold the product of his upstream axework. On his gold trips Smith had noted the pine forests on the upper Forth. In 1862 he became the first to harvest the 'red' pine ('pencil' pine - *Athrotaxis cupressoides*) of Pencil Pine Creek for building timber. He let nature do the work for him by cutting trees that fell into the creek, anticipating that the floods of autumn and winter would rush them down the Forth to his home. Rapids prevented transporting logs in rafts in the North American fashion. The sight of debris lodged high in the Dove River scrub like foundlings would have demonstrated to him the necessity of guiding his logs as far as he could. His downstream patrol ended at a place he called the 'hole in the rock', where the torrent dropped out of sight and the terrain was impassable.²²⁰ Crooking his branded logs at the

²¹⁶ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²¹⁷ Peter Knox-Shaw, *The Explorer in English Fiction*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 1987, Chapter 8: 'The Country of the Mind: Exploration as a Metaphor in Voss', pp. 164-82

²¹⁸ Smith accounts, NS234/4/1 (AOT)

²¹⁹ NS234/14/7 (AOT) contains a copy of an undated letter in which Smith warns Thomas and William Field that failure to pay their debt to the road trust will result in legal action.

²²⁰ Ronald Smith, 'Visit to the Pencil Pine River March 1905', NS234/19/8 (AOT)

Forth Heads, Smith milled them in a sawpit and sold the prized timber across the north of the colony. Some of it built a Wesleyan chapel at Circular Head; other timber was sold for building at Launceston, Torquay and Latrobe, one log fetching £18.²²¹ After pining had been brought to the attention of the government, in 1868 Smith won a £262 contract to forge a 34-kilometre bridle track from the Pine Road at Penguin towards Pencil Pine Creek, the third highland route to result from his efforts.²²² Smith eventually ceded the pine trade to Joseph Raymond (senior), who used a bullock team to drag felled King Billy pine trees to Pencil Pine Creek.

Thus Smith's plans became inextricably linked to the moods of the Forth River. The snow-driven freshes that impeded his testing of the stream beds also tossed his logs down ravines and out to the heads. His income was likewise proscribed: it might be years before his felled logs appeared, and when they did they might be swept into Bass Strait or meet other mishap. Some of Smith's logs were flushed downstream as late as July 1871 and perhaps in August 1873.²²³ A squared log became the subject of dispute when it washed up sixteen kilometres away from Forth near Northdown.²²⁴ An estimated £20-worth of Smith's 'red' pine was burned, probably by drunkards, at the sawmill site in 1864.²²⁵

Smith needed financial support. By 1867 he had found it, in the form of three generous partners in the Don River sawmill, brothers Edwin and Anderson Cummings, and Joseph Raymond (senior), whose Canadian sawmilling experience may have inspired Smith's pining expeditions. This small syndicate agreed to grub-stake his prospecting through the latter part of the decade, in hope of wresting some financial consolation from the confining ravines of county Devon.²²⁶

²²¹ ? to Smith 3 April 1871, no. 8, NS234/3/1 (AOT); Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania', no. 30, *Mercury* 29 March 1884

²²² 'Public Works Under Various Loans Acts: Report of Director', Parliamentary Paper 23/1868, p.9. Smith's accounts (NS234/4/1 [AOT]) indicate that he sub-contracted out some of the track-building.

²²³ 'River Forth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 24 July 1871; Mary Jane Love to Smith 3 August 1873, no. 196, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

²²⁴ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 22 August 1871, no. 27; and 29 August 1871, no. 30, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

²²⁵ 'River Leven', *Examiner* 16 January 1864

²²⁶ 'Copper at the Leven', *Examiner* 13 April 1867, p.3; and Edwin Cummings to Smith 26 February 1875, no. 95, NS234/3/4 (AOT)

Despite his efforts, for years Smith fared no better than a novice prospector, being frustrated by a want of mining infrastructure and practical knowledge. In an age when Eldorados were proclaimed regularly within or near Launceston, Smith's reports of specks of gold and outcrops of silver-lead in the mountains began to vex the local newspaper proprietors. *Examiner* editor Henry Button advised Smith to assess the practicability of any lode he found before announcing its discovery.²²⁷ Miffed that Smith had reported finding gold on the Lea and Dove Rivers to the colonial treasurer rather than to his newspaper, *Cornwall Chronicle* editor Thomas Just mocked his prospecting career and blamed him in part for the failure of Tasmania's mining industry:

Mr James Smith, who has made his name famous in past years for his wonderful discoveries of gold deposits in the far north, has added another leaf or two to his previous hard-won laurels....

Apparently Mr Smith considered these discoveries to be too vast in importance for communication to the local press except through the highest official channel....If such discoverers as Mr Smith would work, and wait until they had something more tangible to produce than a *small sample of gold* picked up in two localities far apart, something might even yet result from their great zeal, and perseverance in gold hunting, which has never yet paid either a company or an individual in this colony. To forward such a document as that transmitted with such secrecy by Mr Smith to the Colonial Treasurer is simply an insult to the Government and to the common sense of the community. If this colony really contains large deposits of gold in quartz reefs and alluvial soil - and we believe it does - the sole reason why they have not been profitably worked has been the publication of such ridiculous announcements as this of Mr James Smith. The right men for the work will never be attracted - though it might be to the right place - by learning that Mr Smith *thinks he has found an auriferous quartz reef and has collected a small sample of gold from the banks of two rivers, very*

²²⁷ Henry Button to Smith, ? January 1865, no. 65, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

far apart. We can discover more important facts than these any day of the week within a few miles of Launceston...When Mr Smith is in a position to make an announcement of that character ('a large quantity of gold, with light labor in obtaining it'), and to pilot a rush to the Tasmanian *el dorado*, we shall believe in him, and be happy to see him receive the highest reward offered by the local Government for the discovery of a paying gold field in Tasmania.²²⁸

A trip up country might have made Just more sympathetic - and some Mount Bischoff tin shares did.

It is part of the Smith legend that, until his ultimate success, he was widely ridiculed. He was not an habitual laughing-stock, as suggested by one of his 'tallest' commentators, Noel Rait.²²⁹ Denigration of Smith's endeavours was probably confined to a few apathetic locals, disappointed mining company shareholders and the occasional printed blast like Just's. Writers such as Just have gone so far as to state that the nickname 'Philosopher' was applied as a joke.²³⁰

That Just was among those who disparaged Smith suggests perhaps that he (Just) had some claim on the truth. A scholarly, monastic do-gooder who wrote poetry, pondered every decision (Smith's son Ronald recalled that 'he did not form an opinion lightly. He studied all available information before coming to a decision....If he heard one side of a contentious subject, he required to hear the other side as well.'²³¹) and abstained must have seemed an oddity in the early days when Forth society consisted of he, James Fenton and a handful of poorly educated farmers, some of them blessed by penal servitude with a strong anti-authoritarian streak. It is easy to imagine those who slaved all day ringbarking, scrubbing, burning, ploughing and planting just to stay

²²⁸ 'Another Gold Discovery', *Cornwall Chronicle* 13 January 1869, p.3. See also 'Gold at the River Dove', *Examiner* 12 January 1869, p.2.

²²⁹ Noel Rait, 'Bischoff Bonanza: Philosopher Smith's Rich Discoveries', *Tasmanian Truth* 20 September 1958

²³⁰ Thomas Just, 'Tasmania and its Resources: Tin', *Cornwall Chronicle* 11 August 1875; John McCall, 'Tasmania: its Resources and Future', *Journal of the Royal Colonial Institute*, part 1, 16, December 1909, p.27

²³¹ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith', p.7

solvent, being contemptuous of one who periodically disappeared into the thick of the very forest which blighted their lives - in search of gold and silver.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the title 'Philosopher', although applied before or at an early stage of Smith's prospecting career, appears to have gained respectability only when Smith did as a prospector. He probably 'grew into' a once derogatory nickname by making mineral finds that vindicated his 'philosophy'. Hainsworth claimed otherwise:

I can assure you that the word 'philosopher' has been applied to Mr Smith as a distinctive term and in its legitimate sense by those who have known him best and could thoroughly appreciate his unique character.²³²

That may have been true, but even the self-flagellant Hainsworth would never have spoken a word that disparaged his great friend. Smith's children could only speculate as to the truth. Eldest daughter Annie Bertha suggested that

All this reading and study, no doubt, made the foundation of the knowledge and culture and wisdom that were in later life so characteristic of the man and gained for him the name by which he was affectionately known...²³³

Second son Ronald believed that

however, and whenever the name [Philosopher] was first applied to my father, it was probably because of his wide knowledge and careful and correct reasoning.²³⁴

By the time of Ronald's boyhood in the 1880s, perhaps only a few old-stagers and Smith himself could recall the original application of the nickname:

On the North West Coast he was almost always spoken of as 'Philosopher Smith' or 'The Philosopher'. On one occasion some boys of my own age appealed to me. They had heard that his name was

²³² 'Constant' (Thomas Hainsworth), "Philosopher' Smith', *Cornwall Chronicle* 3 September 1873

²³³ Crowther, *James Smith*, p.4

²³⁴ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith', p.7

really 'James', and they did not believe it. I confirmed that what they had heard was true. How he acquired the name 'Philosopher' was at times a matter of discussion amongst the older people, but, I never heard of anyone that knew. Possibly it originated like the word 'Digger', applied to Australian Soldiers [sic] during the first World War [sic]. It started being used, and no one knew how it started.²³⁵

Like Smith's legend, his nickname, once popularised, was at the mercy of the public. According to Smith's obituarist in the *Daily Telegraph*, it came 'from the fact of his being endowed with an amount of wisdom rarely given to ordinary mortals...',²³⁶ rather than simply, as A Geoffrey Horner asserted in 1940, from his 'power to reason out where a metal might be found...'²³⁷ or 'his devotion to the study of Nature'.²³⁸ The *Daily Telegraph's* Waratah correspondent chose overall character, attributing the nickname to his 'taciturn and didactic...manner', 'strong religious scruples' and strict observation of the Sabbath.²³⁹

Even at an early stage Smith's admirers outnumbered his detractors. Just apologised for his outburst after E B E Walker, for instance, fired off a sharp rejoinder:

Such sarcastic remarks were, I assure you, ill-timed, and are calculated to damp the ardour of any would be prospector....Mr Smith has been prospecting for the last nine years and upwards at his own expense. Whether he has been successful or not remains to be proved; at all costs cold water should not be thrown on his endeavors, particularly as the public have not lost anything by Mr Smith's hard labor and severe privations; his gratuitous services therefore should not be made light of.²⁴⁰

Henry Button also encouraged the prospector, commenting as early as 1866, 'it would only be a graceful though inadequate recognition of his services if funds were

²³⁵ *ibid*

²³⁶ 'Death of Mr Jas Smith', *Daily Telegraph* 16 June 1897

²³⁷ A Geoffrey Horner, 'Philosopher Smith', *Walkabout* 1 December 1940, p.30

²³⁸ 'Tasmania and its Mineral Wealth', *Australian Mining Standard* 1 July 1898, p.41

²³⁹ 'Waratah', *Daily Telegraph* 21 December 1903, p.6

²⁴⁰ E B E Walker, 'Another Gold Discovery', *Cornwall Chronicle* 17 March 1869

subscribed to enable him more fully to test the various deposits.²⁴¹ In 1868 John Regan proposed calling a public meeting to 'recognise [Smith's] services to the colony in [his] indefatigable search after her resources and to request the government to make some recompense for [his] labour,' although there is no evidence that the meeting took place.²⁴²

To prove a lode deep in the bush was to risk starvation. Not that *any* lode carried a guarantee of success. In 1861 and 1862 Smith prospected in the Dial Range near the north-west coast. In an area now featured in the Ferndene Reserve south of Penguin, he found a massive outcrop of iron ore and manganese in association with brown and red hematite - the 'Iron Cliffs'. While searching for a continuation of this deposit he discovered apparently valuable copper and silver on the beach near Penguin Creek, at what would become known as the Penguin silver mine - but was told the government could not grant a mining lease. There was no legislation covering mining on the seashore! This was his reward for perhaps the first copper discovery in the colony (James Fenton claimed that Count Paul Strzelecki had found 'a trace of copper' in the Asbestos Range in 1842.²⁴³) 'Owing to the apathy of the people of this colony,' Smith wrote in 1869, 'little notice was taken of it.'²⁴⁴ Further east along the same beach Smith later found galena at what would become the Neptune mine.²⁴⁵ A mineral lode on Westwood itself baffled the 'experts' - was it copper, rutile, oxide of titanium, iron pyrites or serpentine?²⁴⁶ A black laminated metal (possibly manganese) Smith retrieved from the remarkable faultline of Golden Cliff Gorge remained an unidentified curiosity at Royal Society meetings.²⁴⁷

²⁴¹ 'Metals on the North Coast', *Examiner* 22 September 1866

²⁴² John Regan to Smith 29 October 1868, no. 111, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁴³ James Fenton, *Bush Life in Tasmania 50 Years Ago*, C L Richmond, Devonport, 1964 (originally published 1891), p.36

²⁴⁴ Smith to W B Clarke May 1869, Smith notes, 'Drafts of Letters', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁴⁵ 'Copper Again', *Examiner* 15 February 1862, p.3; 'River Leven', *Examiner* 18 March 1862, p.4; 'The North-West Coast and 'Galena', *Examiner* 3 April 1862, p.5

²⁴⁶ 'Copper', *Examiner* 6 February 1862, p.5; and 'Copper', *Examiner* 15 February 1862, p.3

²⁴⁷ 'River Leven', *Examiner* 5 April 1862; and 'Minerals', *Examiner* 3 May 1862, p.5



Golden Cliff Gorge, Black Bluff. This is where Smith found an unidentified black mineral (possibly manganese) in 1862.

The first encouragement came in 1865 when Ronald Campbell Gunn, after whom Smith would name his son Ronald and also the Campbell River,²⁴⁸ passed on Penguin rock samples to government geologist Charles Gould who, Gunn reported, was 'much interested...and hopes you will persevere in your researches as...where these metals occur of course other mineral veins will be found.'²⁴⁹ Gould came to regard the north-west as probably the most valuable mineral district on the island.²⁵⁰ Although the abandonment of his mineral survey of the colony in early 1867 prevented him thoroughly investigating the area, he offered the first rigorous appraisal of several Smith mining shows in the midst of what the latter now believed to be a rich mineral field. As the upper Forth was studded with gold, the lower reaches of the Blythe and Leven Rivers and Penguin Creek promised the building blocks of a nation - iron, copper, silver and lead.

Nearly all Smith's mineral shows in this area were reworked sporadically. A syndicate formed by the Anglo-Indian army officer and immigration promoter Colonel Andrew Crawford²⁵¹ mined the Iron Cliffs in the 1870s,²⁵² the Tasmanian Iron Company had more success working neighbouring iron lodes at the turn of the century.²⁵³ In April 1867 a small company was formed to test Smith's copper show at Walloa (Copper) Creek near Gunns Plains.²⁵⁴ Nothing came of this, the Copper Creek Prospecting Association (William Clarke's project of three years later) or the Copper Creek Mining Company's efforts shortly before the Great War. Representing the Tasmanian Mineral Exploration Company, a project raised by Hobart interests to keep his expertise working

²⁴⁸ Smith to Charles Sprent 22 June 1883 NS234/2/9 (AOT); see also Ronald Smith, 'Origins of Names', *Cradle Mountain*, unpublished manuscript held by Charles Smith, Launceston, p.9. The Campbell River is a tributary of the Dove River, rising near Cradle Mountain.

²⁴⁹ 21 December 1865, no. 79 and 5 October 1866, no. 85, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁵⁰ Charles Gould, *River Forth and North Coast: Geological Report*, Parliamentary Paper 74/1867

²⁵¹ See G T Stilwell, 'Andrew Crawford (1815-99)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.490-1.

²⁵² Andrew Crawford to Smith 8 February 1873, no. 111; 4 April 1873, no. 136, NS234/3/2; 10 February 1874, no. 40, NS234/3/3 (AOT). See also 'Penguin Creek', *Tasmanian Tribune* 19 June 1873. For later work at the Iron Cliffs, see Tasmanian Department of Mines reports and Peter MacFie, *The Iron Cliffs Mines*, Hobart, Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, 1991.

²⁵³ See Ron Parnell, *The Battle of the Penguin Tramway*, Devonport, Taswegia, 1986.

²⁵⁴ 'Copper at the Leven', *Examiner* 4 April 1867

for Tasmania after his government position was abolished, Gould dismissed Smith's Pyrites (later Dial) Creek iron pyrites show after obtaining unfavourable assays.²⁵⁵ This did not, of course, deter later, unrewarded lessees.²⁵⁶

A member of the gentry, at least, was impressed by Smith's finds. This was perhaps the first hint of the upward mobility that mining would win him:

Lady Dry presents her compliments to Mr Smith and begs to thank him for his politeness in sending the beautiful specimens of Iron [sic] and silver ores and which she received quite safely a short time since....Lady Dry much regrets the unlucky accident which happened to the collection...²⁵⁷

Even though Smith was ultimately unsuccessful in the Dial Range area, his on-going association with the itinerant geologist Gould would serve him well. His self-confidence kept pace with his improving geological knowledge. Galena discoveries on the upper Forth taught him to search for this mineral in quartzose grit.²⁵⁸ He developed an understanding of gold indications in quartz. In 1862 Smith had found a quartz reef near the Lea River. Re-examination seven years later revealed three reefs bearing characteristics of gold-bearing quartz, leading him to work the show in partnership with the Cummings brothers and to assure W B Clarke that

your predictions concerning the auriferous character of a large portion of Tasmania will be verified....Since I saw you [in 1860] I have been carrying on the work of exploration with comparatively slow progress owing to my limited means the denseness of the scrubs the [sic] frequent flooding of the rivers.²⁵⁹

As usual, remoteness ensured that the Lea River quartz was unworkable. If Smith had nothing concrete to show for a decade's prospecting, however, he had at least

²⁵⁵ Charles Gould to Smith 6 March 1871, no. 7, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

²⁵⁶ For later working of these mines check Tasmanian Department of Mines reports, for example, J Harcourt Smith, *Report on the Penguin and Dial Range Mineral Fields*, 1898; and W H Twelvetreves, *Report on the Dial Range and Some Other Mineral Districts on the North-West Coast of Tasmania*, 1903.

²⁵⁷ Lady Dry to Smith 30 July 1870, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁵⁸ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

²⁵⁹ Smith to W B Clarke May 1869, Smith notes, 'Drafts of Letters', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

assembled a network of useful mining connections - W B Clarke, Gunn, Gould and Melbourne mining agent William Clarke - in the event of something good coming his way. He had served his apprenticeship.

Chapter 5: The 'Tin King' and the 'Kaiser': the Mount Bischoff Tin Mine

By 1870 what then would have been seen as the prime years of Smith's life had almost passed. All he had to show for three decades of toil was a sound knowledge of geology, a half-developed farm and prematurely failing health. At least something had happened to transform his solitary existence - the Tasmanian Parliament had caught up with him. In 1867 the *Waste Lands Act* no. 4 had finally allowed leases to be taken out on the silver and copper lodes at Penguin. New assays suggested these had a future, and Smith was unflinchingly optimistic. 'Never has so much copper and lead been found in one locality without rich mines resulting,' he had written of his finds stretching from the coast south through the Dial Range in that year,

but it is not amongst Tasmanians that the necessary discernment and capital for developing these mines is likely to be forthcoming and whether Victorian capitalists will come forward in the matter is a question for themselves to decide. About twelve months ago you [*Examiner* editor Henry Button] remarked in an article in your journal that if Tasmanians would attend to the development of their mines of copper which were known to be extensive it would do as much for Tasmania as copper had done for South Australia.¹

The *business* phase of his mining education represented the cradle of the Tasmanian mining industry. Penguin can be seen as a dress rehearsal for the spectacular success of the Mount Bischoff tin mine; Smith's almost singular triumph flowed from the lessons of the defeat at Penguin. Mount Bischoff signalled that a rich future was possible for bold individuals prepared, as Smith had been, to plumb the western wilds.

¹ draft of letter in Smith notes file NS234/14/7 (AOT)

The period from 1870 to 1876 also contained the greatest highs and lows of Smith's life. Not even being a pioneer Tasmanian prospector (he was now probably the most experienced in the colony, in Tasmanian conditions, at least) prepared him for the rigours of trying to raise a mining company there. The drawbacks of the island's isolation - ignorance about mining, timid local investors and a Tasmanian inferiority complex - hampered Smith's dealings with mainland interests. An additional difficulty was that Victorian investors were unprepared for the absence of infrastructure and the hindrance presented by the terrain and climate. The harshest lesson Smith was to learn, however, was that there was no place in business for personal loyalties. Failure to learn this would spin the Philosopher's great prize from his grasp and crown another man 'King of the Waratah'. It is doubtful that Smith ever recovered from the disappointment.

'Ernest James': the lament of the Tasmanian depression

5

That colonial 'Marsyas' or 'Pied Piper', George Robinson,² who charmed tribal Aborigines with his flute, was not the last such performer in the Tasmanian bush.³ Geoffrey Serle has described how the *Bulletin*, launched in 1880, 'tapped the folk undercurrent' which had been expressed in Australian colonial society (particularly in the pastoral interior) for half a century or more in three main forms: the song, the narrative ballad and the yarn.⁴ Irish street ballads were popular among uneducated convicts and migrants. Drovers sang to pacify their cattle at night; the campfire and the track were forums for news, debate and entertainment; the oral tradition ensured the modification, both deliberate and unwitting, of songs and ballads.⁵

² Mark Twain, *Mark Twain in Australia and New Zealand*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, p.264; Vivienne Rae-Ellis, *Black Robinson, Protector of Aborigines*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria, 1988, pp.47-50

³ for example, an 1880 west coast prospecting party featured a cornet-player ('The West Coast Goldfields: III', *Tasmanian Mail* 3 April 1880)

⁴ Geoffrey Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia: a Cultural History*, William Heinemann, Richmond, Victoria, 1987, p.61

⁵ *ibid*

Smith was musically inclined: he played the fiddle and in later years sang sacred songs in public. These skills were probably developed partly as a comfort to his solitary existence both at home and in the bush. His poems such as 'We'll Guide Our Own Affairs'⁶ and 'Aid and Cheer Each Other',⁷ with their rousing themes and repeated choruses, are actually songs, possibly written to be sung to cheer his lone passage through the inhospitable highlands. 'The North-West Pioneer', a rewriting of the popular song 'The British Grenadier' (as previously discussed), typifies the Australian bushman's adaptation of songs and street ballads to his own situation, as described by Judith Wright:

Songs were seized on, memorized, altered, parodied. They came to mirror the kind of life that their singers led; often hard and crude, almost always womanless, and because of this lack of normal balance, generally naïve and sentimental under the tough hide induced by hardship and the remorseless conditions...⁸

Music has a long tradition in mining, one that is more deeply entrenched than the Cornish being 'like the nightingale; they sing because they must.'⁹ George Kerson describes the American coal-mining tradition of improvising songs which is closely related to that of Wright (above):

From the end of the [American] Civil War to the first decade of the present century [twentieth], no patch or town escaped the fever of improvising or composing ballads, ditties, and doggerel on some phase or other of the mining theme...¹⁰

These songs, Kerson explains,

⁶ *Examiner* 3 August 1869

⁷ *Examiner* 20 January 1870

⁸ cited by Serle, *The Creative Spirit in Australia*, p.61

⁹ Oswald Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1962, p.168

¹⁰ George Kerson; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore: an Illustrated Composition and Documentary Compilation with Emphasis on the Spirit and History of Mines*, Portland, Oregon, 1970, p.53

exude sweat and blood, echo every colliery sounds, capture every colliery smell. They preserve the miners' changing moods and deepest longings...their laughter, wit and humor.¹¹

As described later in this chapter, there is a strong spiritual element in the history of, among others, both German and Cornish mining, which are closely identified with hymn-singing.¹² The 'Australian' institution of carols by candlelight possibly arose from Cornish miners at Moonta singing carols at night by the light of 'fatjacks' (tallow candles).¹³ Perhaps 'Cousin Jack's' tradition of singing carols on the job on the Christmas Eve shift,¹⁴ or the hymn-singing of Welsh coalminers' (labourers at one Welsh coalmine supplicated their protector in a church built of mine timbering 240 metres beneath the surface¹⁵) gave rise to another underground tradition: 'cave-singing', as explored by Marie Bjelke Petersen in her Tasmanian romance *The Captive Singer*¹⁶ (although the acoustic properties of limestone caverns which were reminiscent of opera halls and cathedrals certainly played a part in this development,¹⁷ as did, probably, Romantic interest in 'the sublime'¹⁸ and traditional spiritual links attached to caves.¹⁹)

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² See Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, pp.166-9; and Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, pp.142 and 153.

¹³ Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p.166

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.175

¹⁶ Marie Bjelke Petersen, *The Captive Singer*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1917. See also Margaret Weidenhofer, 'Marie Caroline Bjelke Petersen (1874-1969)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp.300-1.

¹⁷ Alison Alexander, in *The Immortal Flame: Marie Bjelke Petersen: Australian Romance Writer 1874-1969*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1994, p.72, suggests that the cave-dwelling, hymn-singing hero of the novel was possibly inspired by Marakoopa cave guide Harold Byard, 'who sang hymns in the depths of the cave to show its good acoustics. Marakoopa cave features a large chamber known as the Great Cathedral or St Pauls Cathedral which includes a formation not unlike a church organ. An orchestra played in this chamber at the cave's official opening in 1911 ('Wonderful Caves', *Weekly Courier* 28 December 1911, p.34). Visitors to the Chudleigh and Mole Creek caves often commented on their musical properties.

¹⁸ Julia Home, *Jenolan Caves: When the Tourists Came*, Kingsclear Books, Crows Nest, New South Wales, 1993, p.14

¹⁹ George Robinson, for example, recorded that his 'conciliatory' Aborigines believed that a cave at the Den, near present-day Mole Creek, was the lair of Leebrunner, a 'devil' (N J B Plomley [ed.], *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1966, 24 July 1834, p.908). The Kungur caves in Russia's Ural Mountains are believed to have served as a refuge for 'Old Believers', members of a persecuted, conservative seventeenth-century breakaway from the Russian Orthodox Church. See

Exploration has a similar tradition. Ernest Giles²⁰ carried volumes of Poe, Byron and other poets in order to contribute to recitation around the campfire, which

together with ballad singing and yarn spinning, were a feature of outback life whenever men congregated. They also were solace for a man who was permitted by circumstance, and in part obliged, to spend much of his time alone.²¹

As well as taking solace in music, Smith tried to stir Tasmanians with his words. The nine poems he published under the pseudonym 'Ernest James' while he worked the Penguin silver mine represent the peak of his spiritual zeal. These poems, which summarised Smith's system of beliefs - God's love and mercy, Christian brotherhood, British patriotism, and the individual and national paths to glory - were rallying calls to Tasmania in perhaps her darkest hour.

In 1870 there seemed no end to the severe depression that had marked the years since Smith's settlement at the Forth. The colony was desperate for new economic stimulus. In 1853 Tasmanian exports had been valued at £1,756,316, timber, wool, grain and fruit/jam making up more than two-thirds of that figure. Seventeen years later the figure stood at £648,709. Timber had slumped from its gold rush peak of £443,161 through the subsequent glut to only £37,267; wool, chiefly exported to England, was down to £246,402 from £326,096; blight, rust, mainland tariffs and competition had reduced the grain export from £315,153 to £86,718; fruit/jam, likewise burdened by the other colonies, had gone from £123,464 in 1853 to £108,769 in 1870.²² In June 1870 the Van Diemen's Land Company's local agent J W Norton Smith reported that 'I have seen a good deal of poverty amongst the small farmers in New Zealand, but I never saw

also Kevin Kiernan, *Karst, Caves and Management at Mole Creek, Tasmania*, Tasmanian Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage Occasional Paper no. 22, Hobart, 1989, p.20.

²⁰ See Louis Green, 'Ernest Giles (1835-97)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.246-7.

²¹ Ray Ericksen, *Ernest Giles: Explorer and Traveller, 1835-1897*, Hesperian, Carlisle, Western Australia, 1997, p.30

²² *Statistics of Tasmania 1871*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1871

anything to equal the utterly depressed condition of this coast.²³ Worse was to come in 1871 and 1872, when

ruinous prices were made worse by poor harvests. The Victorian market contracted in the face of protective tariffs and increasing home self-sufficiency....The effects of these very low prices were made worse by the generally low standard of cultivation and hence of yields per acre in the North-West. The soil was naturally fertile, but it could not stand up for ever to the traditional Tasmanian practices of over-cropping and under-nourishing.²⁴

In November 1871 Norton Smith reported 'immense' suffering, 'many families having to live on potatoes, without flour, tea, or sugar'.²⁵ Some believed that Tasmania's only chance of economic survival, of beating the mainland tariffs, was annexation by Victoria, a scheme which would leave the island comparatively under-represented in parliament.

Mining was at a low ebb. Once promising collieries had flopped. Gold, the Victorian and New South Wales elixir, had so far returned only £7,475 in export earnings.²⁶ Things would get worse. Launceston, destined to be Tasmania's mining hub, would first grow sceptical of mining ventures: according to Fenton, of 90 gold mining companies that existed in 1870, only two remained in 1875, and the position of Commissioner of Goldfields in the north-east would be abolished.²⁷

While in 1873 the visitor Anthony Trollope found Queensland and Victoria boastful and vigorous, Tasmanians to whom he spoke eagerly declared their 'Sleepy

²³ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD10, 13 June 1870, VDL47/1 (AOT); cited by H J W Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910: the Establishment of an Agricultural Community*, Ph D thesis, Australian National University, 1969, p.72

²⁴ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, pp.68-70

²⁵ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD30, 27 November 1871, VDL 47/1 (AOT); cited by Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.72

²⁶ *Statistics of Tasmania 1881*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1881, p.XI

²⁷ James Fenton, *History of Tasmania from its Discovery in 1642 to the Present Time*, J Walch and Sons, Hobart, 1884, p.387

Hollow' ruined, and he felt the colony had an air of decay.²⁸ The population was stagnant. The failure of the Tasmanian goldfields led young men to try mainland and New Zealand fields. Some of the colony's best-known prospectors of the 1870s and 1880s first sought their fortunes elsewhere: George Renison Bell was in New Zealand until 1866; having renounced Tasmania as a gold country,²⁹ W R Bell scoured Gippsland and the Kiandra region until 1875; Frank Long, a child at the time of the first Australian gold rushes, prospected Victoria and New Zealand before returning to Tasmania by 1872.

James Smith was home girding the nation with his silver mine and his trusty pen. Poem after poem calls Tasmanians to rise against adversity, duty and moral courage being the keys to a prosperous, independent future. As Smith warded off Bass Strait's breakers at the beachfront shaft of the Penguin mine, he might have imagined an invading Victorian army riding them in:

Tasmanians to yourselves be true,
Let not your rights be sold ;
Be wise! the future's yet for you,
And blessings 'twill unfold.
For all who zeal and worth combine,
For all who nobly toil,
In city, town, or in the mine,
Or on the fertile soil.³⁰

Success, it seemed, belonged to the righteous and persevering. 'Hail Tasmania!' expressed Smith's personal creed:

Fields are here for industry -
Fertile soil and varied mine ;
Who would then a sluggard be,
Who would cowardly repine.

²⁸ Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (eds. P D Edwards and R B Joyce), University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1967 (originally published 1873), pp.487-8

²⁹ W R Bell, 'Tasmanian Gold Fields', *Examiner* 15 May 1862

³⁰ 'Annexation - Perish the Thought!', *Examiner* 31 October 1867

Brave it is to persevere,
Making fortune favor us ;
Blessing selves and those most dear,
Noble hearts will e'er do thus.³¹

'We'll Guide Our Own Affairs' joins patriotism with Christian duty, this time exhorting a thriving Tasmania to take its part in a brotherhood of nations. The last of the nine poems, 'Aid and Cheer Other', calls for brotherhood - 'proper union all through the state' - at a time when the Penguin mine was being touted as the potential saviour of the colony:

Now's the time to do our best,
To make each other wise and blest ;
True earnest unity with noble aim
Wins the joy, and wealth, and fame.
Then aid and cheer each other
Then aid and cheer each other
Then aid and cheer each other
And kind success will come.

Smith backed up these rousing lines with several letters to the *Examiner* which served as practical lessons in mining. He discussed the profitability of copper and silver mines in England compared to gold mining;³² the depth at which a copper lode might occur;³³ and the occurrence of greenstone and basalt in north-western Tasmania which W B Clarke regarded as pointers to the presence of gold.³⁴

What happened to Ernest James? Why did he disappear from print in 1870? Perhaps his hopes for Tasmania were dashed by the failure of the Penguin silver, leaving him too dispirited or chastened to raise renewed hope at the next promising find. More probably he was sacrificed to an overwhelming workload, stirring words giving way

³¹ *Examiner* 31 July 1869

³² J (James Smith), 'Mining in Tasmania', *Examiner* 27 July 1871

³³ J (James Smith), 'Mineral Lodes', *Examiner* 17 October 1871; James Smith, 'Penguin Silver Ore', *Examiner* 18 January 1872

to actual deeds. Very few poems flowed from Smith's pen during his intense business phase of the 1870s. Never again would such passion burn in his verse.

The Penguin silver mine

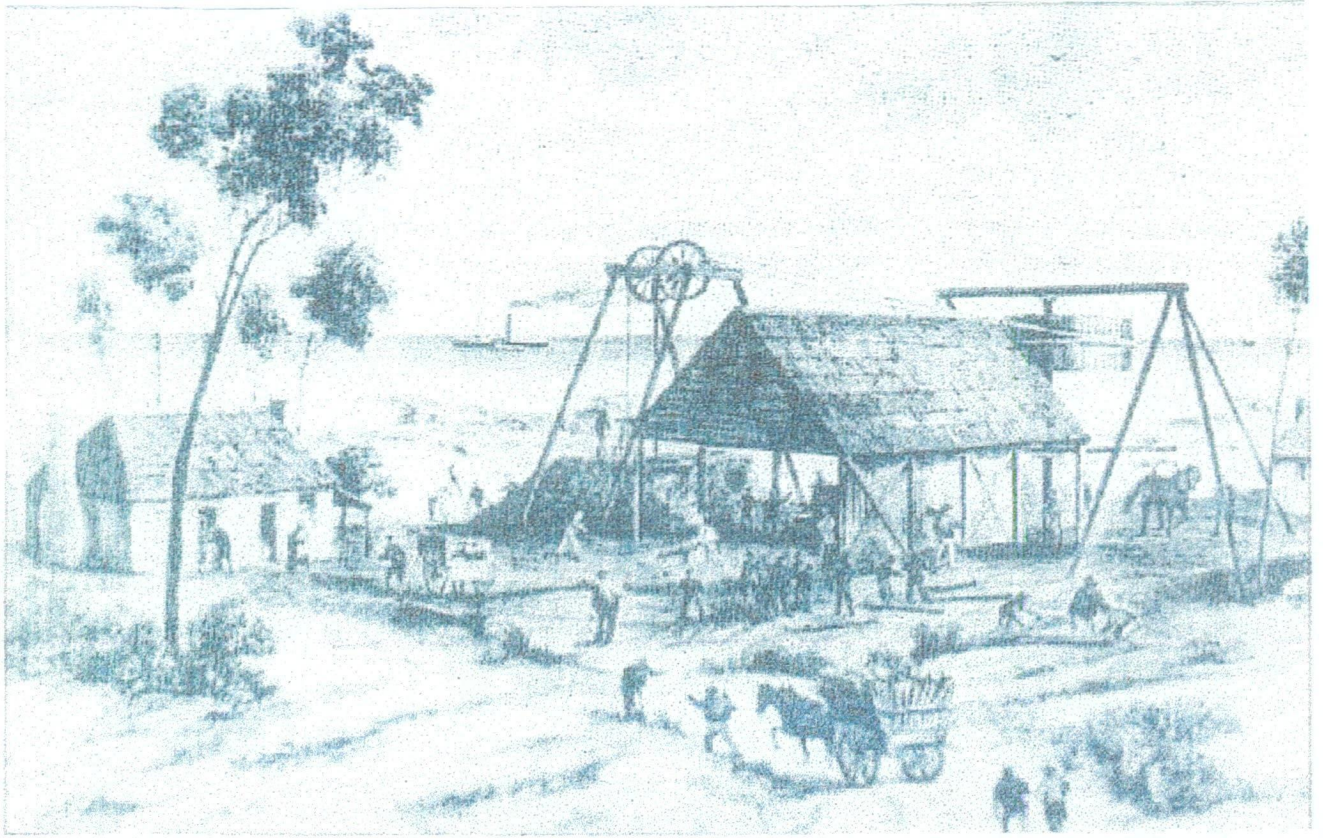
When the escaped convict Samuel Britton became a highwayman, he knew to haunt busier byways than the one he had helped cut over Gads Hill for the Van Diemen's Land Company.³⁵ Not even good 'Dr' E B E Walker could have revived the mouldering bones unearthed as the road to Penguin was benched into the cliffline near his home.³⁶ It was as a mining investor, however, not as a medic, that Walker, along with the Cummings brothers and Joseph Raymond (senior), beat the new path to Penguin in 1870. The advent of large-scale precious-metal mining might have scared Britton's convict ghost back into its rightful era. Hammering and sawing echoed as McDonald's nineteen-room hotel, the blacksmith's shop and workers' quarters took shape. Miners, mechanics and labourers raised a dyke of clay and stone to hold out Bass Strait and prepared for the horse windlass. Out on the bay Ned Beecraft's schooner the *Trader* awaited fresh errands. Tools clanged on the counter of the Cummings brothers' store. The Cornish mining 'captain' Michael Stephens dodged between newspaper correspondents as he supervised the eight-hour shifts and the four compartments of the shaft.³⁷ Smith would have found it hard to recognise the scrubby dunes he had explored less than a decade before while tracing the iron lode back from the Dial Range.

The true state of affairs could only be ascertained in the boardroom. Lured by an assay of three tons of ore which contained 15% copper, 5% cobalt, 3% nickel and 38 ounces of silver per ton, the Penguin Silver Mines Company was doomed from the moment it issued its prospectus. The recurring theme in Smith's mining education of the

³⁴ James Smith, 'Gold', *Examiner* 26 October 1872

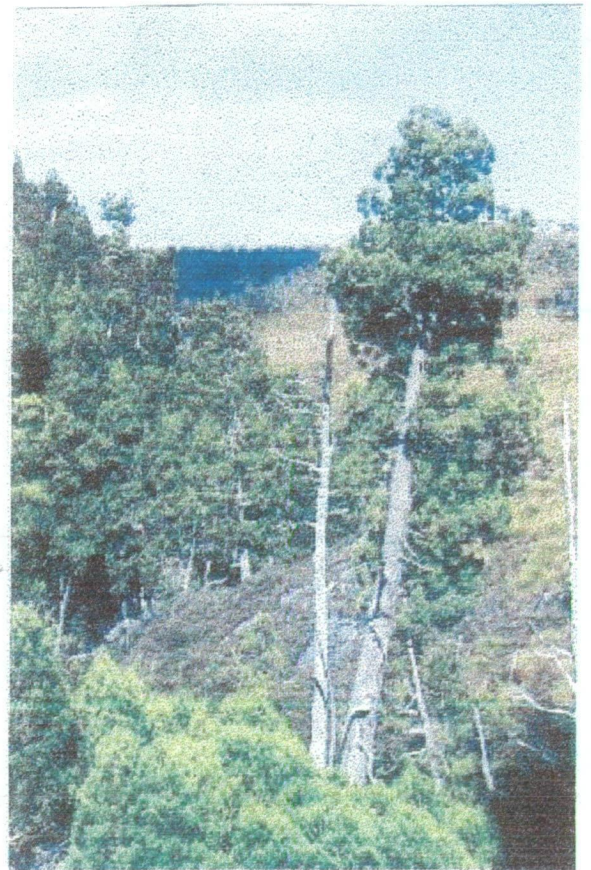
³⁵ that is, the Van Diemen's Land Company track, or 'Great Western Road'. See C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, pp.78-82.

³⁶ Smith notes, 'Bushrangers', NS234/14/3 (AOT)



(Top) The Penguin silver mine, circa 1870. Note the horse whim (a wheel turned by horse-power - right) driving the winding machinery of the shaft (centre).

(Bottom) Pencil pines along Pencil Pine Creek, near Cradle Mountain. This is where Smith harvested pine timber, chopping down pencil pines that would fall into the creek and be carried down the Forth River system to his home.



difficulties of being a pioneer, of having to break new ground (both literally and metaphorically), often extended to dealing with experienced mainland mining interests. Negotiation of the terms of sale of the property to the Penguin Company was so cautious and drawn-out that the new owner threatened to sue the original proprietors for breach of contract.³⁸ Smith's inward correspondence suggests that he was the main stickler. His partner Edwin Cummings wrote to him after a meeting in Launceston organised to settle terms:

I am greatly surprised and grieved that after your expressing yourself as satisfied in Grubb's [the legal manager's] office and saying if anything should occur you would see Grubb, instead of which you left town leaving us all to suppose you were fully satisfied and said not a word to either Walker or myself and not a word is said for a week when I receive a letter from you intimating that you have written to the Attorney General and giving me his opinion but you take care not to give me the case you submitted to him. I shall not argue the case with you as you have never condescended to argue with me. It appears you have determined to take a certain course of action and that you are perfectly indifferent as to the opinion of those who are associated with you and whose interests give some claim to your consideration.³⁹

Anxious, presumably, for some reward for their years of toil, Smith and his partners kept too many *paid-up* shares for themselves.⁴⁰ This put the onus on a minority, the new, *contributing* shareholders, to answer any further calls on shares. Naively, or duplicitously, the prospectus suggested that further calls might not be needed. The prospectus claimed that hundreds of tons of ore awaited shipment to England to be sold, implying that the mine would make money immediately. The sale of the property to the

³⁷ *Cornwall Chronicle* 20 May 1870 and 22 June 1870

³⁸ See copy of the resolution dated 19 July 1870, no. 154, NS234/3/1 (AOT).

³⁹ Edwin Cummings to Smith 22 July 1870, no. 156, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁰ various letters to Smith, July 1870, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

Penguin Company, it stated, would pay for the erection of a small engine for winding and pumping, and a reveratory furnace.⁴¹

Optimism reigned for some time. Government geologist Charles Gould, who had given the mine a favourable report in 1867⁴² and taken a large parcel of shares in it, was aggrieved that the speed of developments gave him no chance to buy additional scrip. 'I must congratulate you on the step you have made towards a fortune', he wrote to Smith: 'You may consider all your toil ended now and the time arrived for the reward to be reaped.'⁴³ Melbourne agent William Clarke concurred: 'There is no doubt about the mine. I believe it will be the best thing in the colonies.'⁴⁴

Smith's toil was actually far from over, and he did not take success for granted. Even though for eighteen months he based himself on a rented property close at hand to the Penguin mine,⁴⁵ he continued to test the highlands while his old partners and some new nominees managed the business. In July 1871 he wrote to the Van Diemen's Land Company asking if they would encourage prospecting on their property and, if so, on what terms.⁴⁶ He also met the company's local agent, J W Norton Smith, who was suitably impressed:

Should the Court determine to make any further search for gold on the Surrey and Hampshire Hills next summer I think I should recommend a Mr Smith who has been on the diggings of Victoria but who has spent a good many years prospecting the government land on this coast whenever he has had a little time to spare he [sic] is the man who discovered the Penguin silver mines; he would work for considerably less than a Victorian but would rather have his rations found and be paid a premium for anything he may find or according to its value. He is

⁴¹ *Cornwall Chronicle* 6 May 1870

⁴² Charles Gould, *River Forth and North Coast: Geological Report*, Parliamentary Paper 74/1867

⁴³ 18 May 1870, no. 143, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁴ Clarke to Smith 13 August 1870, no. 152, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁵ See Smith's evidence, *Road, Rouse's Camp to Wynyard: Report from Select Committee, with Minutes and Evidence*, Parliamentary Paper 119/1882, p.13; also letters from Thomas Giblin to Smith 1868-71, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁴⁶ Smith to J W Norton Smith, 31 July 1871, VDL47/1 (AOT)

I think a suitable man...In addition to his other qualifications he adds great intelligence.⁴⁷

The directors' intransigence clearly frustrated Norton Smith:

Should the Court think fit to enter into any arrangement with [Smith] I can let him know at almost any time, my idea is that it would be to offer him a certain amount per week on profit arising from any discovery he might make than to spend much money in the first instance. If the Company were to keep him in rations and send a man with him there would be no great loss even should he not succeed. At present there is no inducement for men to prospect the Company's lands for they cannot touch their discovery and are likely at the mercy of the Company, whereas if a discovery is made on Crown land the discoverer can buy the land for a mere trifle.⁴⁸

The company's responses to Smith's and Norton Smith's entreaties months later offered little incentive, promising merely to consider terms Smith would propose and to 'deal liberally' with him if he found anything of value.⁴⁹

The need to prospect may have precluded Smith taking a directorship in the Penguin Silver Mines Company. On the other hand, perhaps a prospector was not considered worthy of a directorship, or did not consider himself worthy. Smith's later protégé Charles Hall believed that the discoverer's attendance would have saved the company.⁵⁰ Those who were elected faced great difficulties. Almarin Paul has described how early American miners angrily tossed away the apparently useless 'black stuff' (silver) which later made astronomical fortunes.⁵¹ Silver was poorly understood in Australia too, only the failed silver-lead ventures near Adelaide at Glen Osmond - the

⁴⁷ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD25, 16 July 1871, VDL47/1 (AOT)

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ Van Diemen's Land Company to Smith, 1 December 1871, no. 37.5, NS234/3/2; J W Norton Smith to Smith 24 January 1872, no. 43, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁵⁰ Charles Hall to Smith 14 August 1872, no. 67, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

⁵¹ Almarin B Paul, *The History of the Comstock Lode 1850-1920*, Nevada Bureau of Mines, Reno, 1966; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.573

cradle of Australian metal mining⁵² - preceding Penguin. The latter was also the first Tasmanian mine to attract significant mainland investment. Roberts has pointed out that the Tasmanian government lacked the financial resources to support and encourage its infant mining industry at this time.⁵³ To make matters worse, the struggle for financial survival in the north-west had made ultra-cautious investors even of those coasters who had shared in the excitement of the mainland gold rushes. They were suspicious of mainlanders who spoke highly of the Penguin mine but wanted only mainland labour to work it. The climate for mineral development was totally different to that of Victoria. A 'culture clash' was inevitable.

It was soon clear that the rosy picture painted of a mine on the verge of profit was misleading. Management had been very lax. Cornish miners were famous not just for their practical skill, but for their obstinacy. Pryor attributes the failure of experienced Cornish miners at the Victorian gold rushes to their refusal to acknowledge that the rules of finding alluvial gold differed from those of finding stream tin.⁵⁴ (Later, as Payton explains, the Cornishmen thrived as hard-rock miners on the Victorian goldfields.⁵⁵) It was a Cornish custom to select the site of a trial shaft by the miner whirling a pick around his head and digging where it fell.⁵⁶ Perhaps this was Stephens's technique. After missing the main lode, a very expensive mistake given the hardness of the rock, he had shown a Cornish disdain⁵⁷ for making the mine pay as he worked, preferring to prove it first at all costs:

He's a good mine, but 'twill take money to make up; I'll bring un out right. If these people won't work un, I'll take un on tribute; I can find people to help me.⁵⁸

⁵² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.105

⁵³ Glyn Roberts, *The Role of Government in the Development of the Tasmanian Metal Mining Industry: 1803-1883*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 1909, p.74

⁵⁴ Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1962, p.23

⁵⁵ Philip J Payton, *The Cornish Miner in Australia (Cousin Jack Down Under)*, Dyllansow Truran, Trewelsta, Cornwall, 1984, p.129

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p.26

⁵⁷ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.122

⁵⁸ J (James Smith), 'Penguin Silver Mine', *Examiner* 29 August 1871

His employment of ten-year-old children to select ore for assaying alarmed at least one visitor to the mine and did not impress its Melbourne agent.⁵⁹ In fact this was an age-old tradition. Until the nineteenth century, twelve-year-old German boys began their mining careers sorting the ore at what was called a 'cobbing table'.⁶⁰ Cornish miners, who called it a 'pickey table', had brought the custom to South Australia's 'Little Cornwall'. At the Moonta copper mine the 'pickey boys' classified ore under the supervision of a

'grass captain' or surface boss. They graded it into 'prill' (rich ore), 'alvins' (low-grade) and 'attle' (waste). In case it ever paid to treat them, the alvins were dumped on vacant ground, and the prill was taken to the...smelters...⁶¹

It was hardly 'high-tech'. Stephens was sacked, but Andrew English, his replacement recruited by the Penguin Company in Victoria, was too aggressive for Tasmanians, especially when he fired 'a lot of useless over-paid [local] men' in favour of Victorian labour. Mining operations were characterised by farcical waste. In August 1871 Smith found that apparently worthless stone raised by Stephens had been crushed and that English was acting under orders to dress it, using a machine unsuited to this purpose. The legal manager hoped that in this manner money would be raised to buy a suitable ore dressing device!⁶² Silver metallurgy was not easy, and consulting geologist Professor George Ulrich⁶³ declared

Had the Penguin Silver Mining Company studiously endeavoured to erect machinery for the purpose of washing away the precious metal in the slimes, they could not have succeeded better.⁶⁴

Contributing shareholders who had been lured by the glowing assays and promises of the Penguin Company prospectus refused to 'stump up' the £3,000 English wanted to spend on new machinery. Bickering broke out about the unfairness of this

⁵⁹ 'A Holiday Tour of the N W Coast', *Examiner* 22 April 1871, p.5; William Clarke to Smith 12 September 1870, no. 170, NS234/3/1(AOT)

⁶⁰ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.169

⁶¹ Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p.35

⁶² 'River Forth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 18 August 1871

⁶³ See Michael Hoare, 'George Heinrich Friedrich Ulrich (1830-1900)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.321-2.

burden falling upon only a small proportion of shares. One of the directors' harshest critics, local hotelkeeper John Sturzaker, made the mistake of setting foot on the property in which he had a share - and found himself summoned to court charged with larceny and trespass!⁶⁵ Many shareholders forfeited. Not even furious back-peddalling by the original proprietors — Smith tried to set an example by relinquishing 800 of his own shares — could save the day. In November 1871, a year after he started work at the Penguin, English reported on progress to a special meeting of shareholders. His recommendation of spending a further £2,000 on sinking 90 metres led the directors to suspend operations and discharge all hands — including English himself. Despite William Clarke's failure to sell the mine in England, the company limped on for another four years with its fate already sealed and the public as ignorant as ever of the mine's true value.⁶⁶

As crushing a blow as the Penguin failure must have been to Smith, it advanced his education. Naivete had damaged the proprietors' interests. Smith's steady presence had been missed in the directorship: his future conduct in mining business suggests that the lesson of the need to control his own destiny was not lost on him.⁶⁷ His frustration would not have been tempered by knowing that as the mine's discoverer his would be the name most closely associated with its failure.

The 'mountain of tin'

While English was 'stumping' the Penguin mine, Smith was mounting what was in retrospect his definitive expedition. He was not grub-staked on this trip and, therefore, strictly speaking, was not obliged to share any 'spoils' with his usual partners. Yet his financial position was dire, suggesting a 'make or break' situation. Five months earlier,

⁶⁴ 'A B C' (James Smith), 'Silver and Lead Mining in Tasmania', *Examiner* 30 September 1880

⁶⁵ *Cornwall Chronicle* 14 August 1871

⁶⁶ *Cornwall Chronicle* 7 January 1876; Clarke to Smith 16 August 1872, no. 68, NS234/3/2 and J L Miller to Smith 21 August 21 1872, no. 72, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

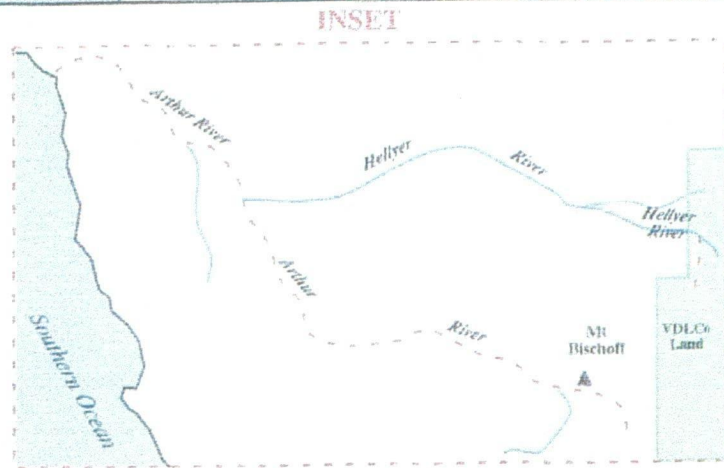
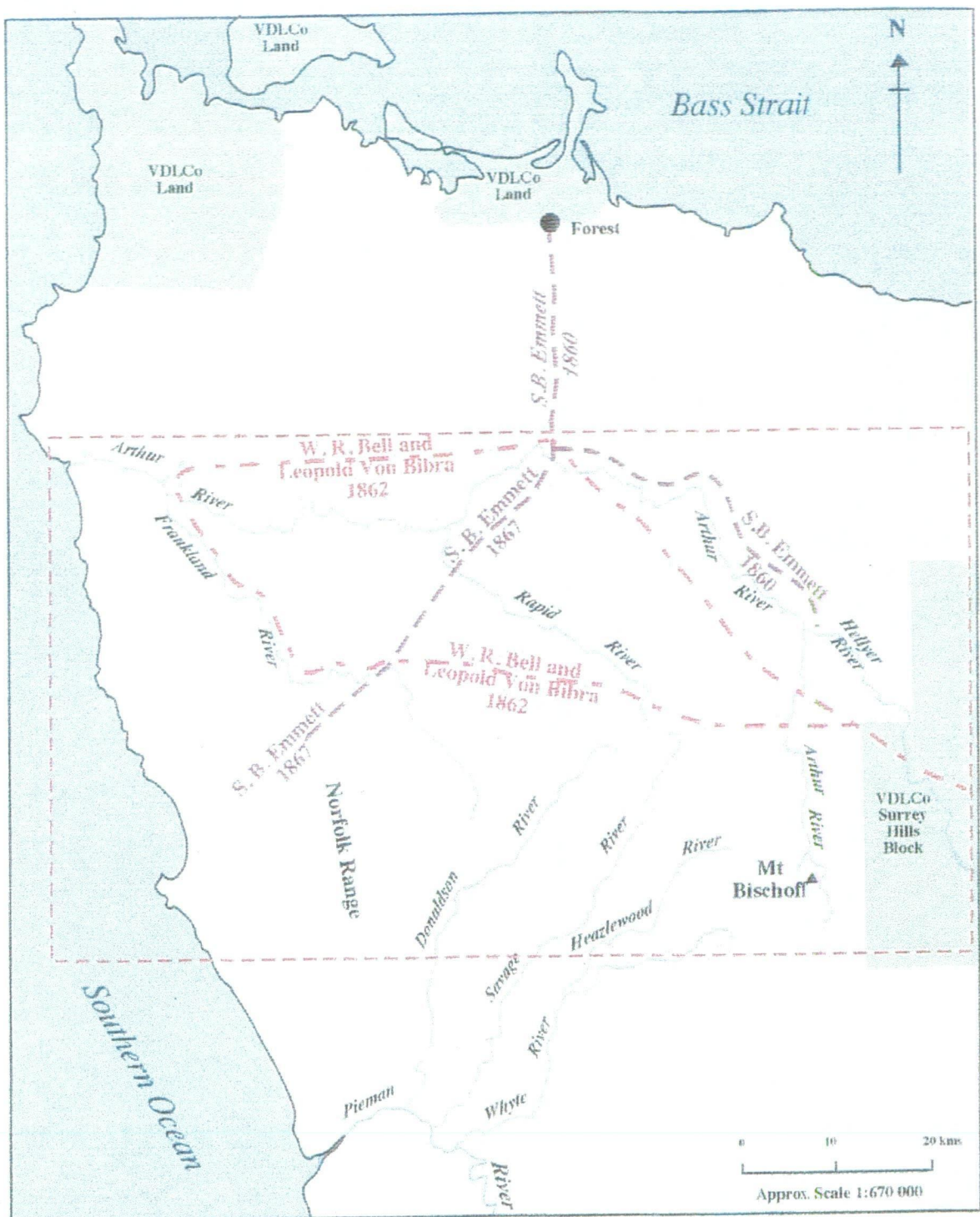


Fig. 5 Prospecting in the Arthur River catchment : 1860 - 1871 with inset showing the original mis-identification of river systems.

in May 1871, Thomas Giblin had implored him to pay his rent on the property at Penguin, which was then two years overdue, amounting to £44. Giblin needed the money:

I know you have been at heavy expense exploring etc, and have therefore allowed the rent to run on, but trust you will be [able?] to do something...⁶⁸

The three-kilo possum-skin bag on the prospector's back as he set out belied this burden and the size of his new undertaking: the supplies he had had packed to the foot of the Black Bluff Range would last him two or three months, beginning in October 1871. His health, taxed by a dozen years in the bush and by one fall in particular, necessitated light travel. The essential difference between this and previous expeditions, however, was something else.⁶⁹

Smith had probed the 'Hellyer' River with S B Emmett nine months earlier, suffering severely on the return trip. (Prospecting his way 30 kilometres back to the north-west coast, equipped with six days' provisions, a revolver and Bravo, his dog, he appears to have got lost and fatigued, emerging near the Black River - present-day Mawbanna - about 40 kilometres west of his intended destination.⁷⁰) Like the upper Forth River, the Arthur system had never been completely traversed, leaving prospectors at the mercy of inaccurate Van Diemen's Land Company maps. Smith did not realise that this had led Emmett, the champion of the Arthur, into error, diverting him from the river's upper reaches which were the likely source of the gold panned further downstream. The explorers Henry Hellyer⁷¹ and John Helder Wedge⁷² had speculatively placed the confluence of the Arthur and Hellyer Rivers much further west than it actually is. The result was that Emmett knew the present Arthur River south of Circular Head as the Hellyer (the tributary stream), believing that the parent stream, as described by

⁶⁷ A M Walker to Smith 25 July 1871, no. 17, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁶⁸ Thomas Giblin to Smith 30 May 1871, no. 11, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁶⁹ The description of Smith's Mount Bischoff expedition and the first smelting of Mount Bischoff tin is based on his notes filed as 'Exploring' (NS234/14/3 [AOT]). These were probably compiled in the 1890s for a lecture or newspaper article about his life.

⁷⁰ S B Emmett, 'Exploration', *Examiner* 14 January 1871; and Emmett to Smith 4 February 1871, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁷¹ See Hellyer's 'Camp Draught' map, VDL343/11 (AOT).

Wedge, ran further south on a gradually converging course. For more than a decade after his first discovery of gold on the 'Hellyer' in January 1860 Emmett searched further south for a river he had already found. The true course of the Arthur was established by the complementary explorations of Robert Quiggin and Charles Sprent (1872)⁷³ and W R Bell and Thomas Raymond (1878).⁷⁴

As noted earlier, there had been no want of European visitors to the Mount Bischoff area. The Van Diemen's Land Company's surveyor Henry Hellyer had skirted Mount Bischoff in 1827.⁷⁵ His discovery of waratah blooms on Knole Plain, the sweet nectar of which refreshed his weary troops, had prompted him to christen the Waratah River on a second visit in 1828.⁷⁶ George Robinson's 'conciliatory party' (1834)⁷⁷ and the trigonometrical surveyor James Sprent (in about 1843) had likewise forged a passage through this country, the latter climbing Mount Bischoff. Of more interest to Smith was that in 1862 the prospectors W R Bell and Leopold von Bibra had washed gold on the Arthur River and its tributary the Frankland. In addition, in 1863 the then premier James Whyte and treasurer Charles Meredith had been moved by personal examination of the Bischoff country to send Charles Gould's former assistant Gordon Burgess to cut a track through the thick scrub from Knole Plain towards the west coast as an aid to prospectors. Some, surely, had accepted the invitation to test the Arthur River and Mount Bischoff.

Smith took the new Plank Road to Castra, and from there probably followed his old route over Black Bluff. For several weeks he tested the head waters of the Leven and Pieman Rivers near the Vale of Belvoir, but he had

long had a presentiment that to be successful I must turn my attention to the immediate vicinity of Mount Bischoff. Against this presentiment there was the fact that other prospectors had been to that mountain and to the

⁷² For Wedge's report see Parliamentary Paper 21/1861.

⁷³ ? to Smith 20 November 1872, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁷⁴ James Fenton, 'Pioneer Work in Devon: XXXIV: Exploration', *North-West Post* 17 February 1891

⁷⁵ C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, p.65

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.102

⁷⁷ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, 12 June 1834, p.884

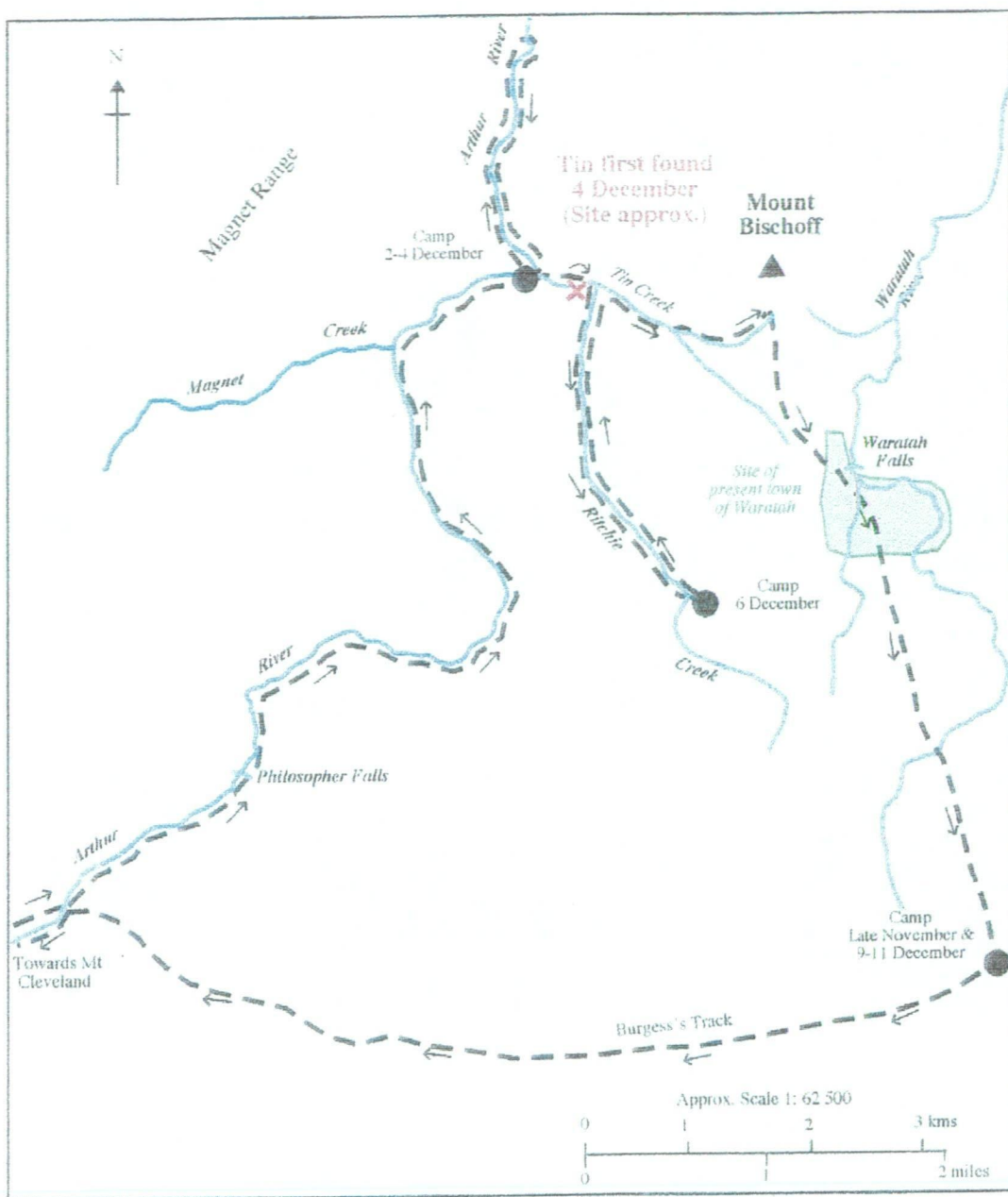


Fig. 6 James Smith's Prospecting Trip to Mount Bischoff 1871

streams shown on Hellyer's map as trending near it. Having for years allowed my own reasoning to overcome presentiment,⁷⁸

Smith finally gave in to it. This was an experienced prospector at the height of his powers, guided by his 'nose', by instinct rather than by reason. Crossing the Surrey Hills block near the station house, he camped on Knole Plain, the open moorland to the south of Mount Bischoff, after two months in the bush. Rain kept him in his calico tent on the plain for three days. Finally, slogging through scrub off the Burgess track, Smith would have heard the Arthur thundering down a 50-metre fall, now Philosopher Falls, into the trough that outlines Mount Bischoff.

In two weeks — *three*, perhaps — he could have twisted his way downstream to the breakers of the Southern Ocean, 150 kilometres away. His new aim, however, was simply to test the upper Arthur and the lower half of one of its tributaries, the Waratah, in preparation for a later expedition.⁷⁹ Lessons of his arduous mining education, more than a dozen years of toil and study, were being brought to bear. Smith knew to test a gold-bearing stream at its head waters for the matrix, and in particular to watch for a north-south strike of slate or schist rocks occurring with hornblendic rocks, which W B Clarke regarded as an indicator of a gold lode nearby. If the strike of the rocks was unpromising, he would switch to searching for other minerals, having already familiarised himself with pointers to silver and copper deposits in particular. Such was the case on the upper Arthur. As Smith approached Mount Bischoff, the few colours he had found in the boulder-strewn gorge ceased and the rocks struck more towards the east and west.⁸⁰ There was no gold deposit here. Was there something else? Downstream ahead of him the river would have rippled as it took a small issue from the east. This, according to Hellyer's old map, was the Waratah River.

Having rested as usual on the Sabbath, on Monday, December 4 1871, the nameday of Saint Barbara, patron saint of miners,⁸¹ he examined the rocks in the dark

⁷⁸ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁷⁹ *ibid*

⁸⁰ 'The Rev W B Clarke and Gold in Tasmania', *Tasmanian* 28 August 1886

⁸¹ Michael Walsh (ed.), *Butler's Lives of Patron Saints*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1987, p.63

course of the 'Waratah'. At a sandbar in the stream he swirled a trace of black in his dish 'which in the gloom of the scrub seemed to resemble stream tin.'⁸²

Tin finds had been claimed in Australia sporadically almost since the time of the First Fleet.⁸³ The original discovery of payable tin, however, now credited to a New England shepherd, Joseph Wills, in July 1871, was then barely a ripple on the millpond of colonial metal-mining.⁸⁴ As was the case at Penguin, the mineral Smith had discovered was virtually unknown in the colony, which meant that pictures or imported specimens were his only guides. In the half-light Smith reserved judgement and, deciding to resume the search for gold lower down the Arthur, retraced his steps. Next day

being at a [place?] where the rays of the sun shone very clearly I re-examined the little sample of mineral and at once became convinced that it was either tin ore or a new mineral resembling it. In applying the lens I at once saw that many of the particles were so angular that they could not have rolled very far from the matrix from which they had been liberated and I at once determined to try to follow up the discovery.⁸⁵

The adrenalin must have pumped as Smith re-ascended the 'Waratah'. With growing excitement he searched for the junction of the quartz porphyry and slate bedrock, for tin *in situ*. He panned up the main stream (later named Ritchie Creek), due south away from Mount Bischoff, a nine-hour diversion that returned not a trace of metal. He camped for the night high up Ritchie Creek.⁸⁶

About ten days had now passed since Smith's arrival at Knole Plain: his collie-spaniel cross 'Bravo' had helped out by hunting up an echidna, but the tuckerbox was empty again.⁸⁷ Next day, armed only with a pick, he tested the branch stream he had

⁸² Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁸³ J E Carne, *The Tin-Mining Industry and the Distribution of Ores in New South Wales*, Mineral Resources no. 14, New South Wales Department of Mines, Sydney, 1911, pp.4-15

⁸⁴ *ibid*, pp.15-6.

⁸⁵ *ibid*. These facts are repeated in Smith's letter to Julian Thomas 23 August 1894, no. 260, NS2342/18 (AOT)

⁸⁶ Smith to W R Bell 11 July 1878, NS234/3/7 (AOT)

⁸⁷ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

passed by the previous day. His hunch was correct: the creek bed was full of porphyry.⁸⁸ Within a few minutes he obtained a quarter of a kilo of tin. Other minerals — antimony, zinc, galena — outcropped in the black payload issuing from the dense scrub. Tracing the tin was easy now. He picked crystals out of crevices in the creek bed, and at its source, where Mount Bischoff Company tailings were later piled, Smith washed more than a kilo of tin to the dish. He had found the motherlode.

A 'mountain of tin' stood above him and the Arthur River valley. Eagerly he pressed onto Bischoff's barbed slopes but, having been rationed a quarter of a pound of bread and a pint of tea with sugar for several days, he was too weak for the climb. He did not stand on the summit shaking his fist in vindication, like the cliché of the wizened old codger invoked by Noel Rait:

'I've found it - I've found it at last. They laughed at me, but I've found it - a whole mountain of rich, beautiful tin.' He crawled to where his dog lay, ribs thrusting through the skin, tongue lolling.

'They won't think we're mad now, feller. The biggest tin mine in the world - just think of it! Not lode tin - this is tin you can dig off the mountainside with your pick. The whole mountain is lined with the stuff!'⁸⁹

Rait's story is illustrated by a sketch of - of all things - a *beardless* prospector.

The return to Knole Plain drove Smith through thick horizontal and myrtle forest where the town of Waratah now stands. The thunder of water diverted him from his south-easterly compass bearing. Pushing out into the open,

I saw a fine stream rushing over a basalt precipice and following this stream to the eastward I soon found it was the Waratah River and I of course named the precipice the Waratah Falls...⁹⁰

For generations of Tasmanian miners this view became synonymous with the mighty drumming of industry. Smith now renamed his 'Waratah' Tin Creek. A hunch had sent

⁸⁸ *ibid*

⁸⁹ Noel Rait, 'Bischoff Bonanza: Philosopher Smith's Rich Discoveries', *Tasmanian Truth* 20 September, 1958, p.20

⁹⁰ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

him to Mount Bischoff; an inaccurate map had led him to test the wrong stream: instinct and luck were his allies. Despite the inaccuracy of the Hellyer map he was using, Smith probably knew that his tin discovery was on Crown land rather than Van Diemen's Land Company property. Presumably the map which he refers to as his guide was the 1832 'Map of the Van Diemens Land Company's Proposed Eastern Locations', one of only two Hellyer maps which embraces both Mount Bischoff and the Waratah River. It plots Mount Bischoff west of the Van Diemen's Land Company's Surrey Hills block. (Hellyer's 'Surrey Hills' map - VDL343/13 (AOT), drawn in 1831 - shows the earlier proposed boundary lines, with the summit of Mount Bischoff marking the western boundary of the Surrey Hills block.) When in February 1872 Smith negotiated terms in the event of finding a mineral show on Van Diemen's Land Company property, he was seeking a gold show to help pay for the development of the Mount Bischoff tin deposit.⁹¹

By Monday, 11 December, Smith was down to his last scrap of bread. Returning drenched to camp at nightfall and building a fire from bark and sticks, he found that the scrap had fallen from his knapsack. Luckily this small reward had not been snaffled by an animal, and after recovering it from the ground, Smith recalled, 'I felt so happy that small as the meal was I enjoyed it with the utmost satisfaction.'⁹²

Weakening, he begged a meal from the Surrey Hills stockman, Charles Drury, but found that gulps of water had already cured his hunger.⁹³ Nervous energy drove him onward: the streams were dropping to unusually low levels. Perhaps, Smith now considered, he had overlooked tin in black sand while prospecting north-bound rivers draining the Surrey Hills. Unfortunately, a re-check yielded nothing of value. Smith washed and picked the waterways for most of the prospecting season, punctuated by a visit home to recuperate. In the new year he joined J W Norton Smith and a mainland mining 'expert', John Hunt, whom the Van Diemen's Land Company had engaged to test its holdings, on a trip to the Montagu River to examine a place where zircons and sapphires had been found. Hunt, who had refused to start for the company's Middlesex Plains block without a bottle of sherry, further distinguished himself on this occasion by

⁹¹ Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company 24 February 1872, VDL24 (AOT)

⁹² Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

getting lost, as he claimed, 'without food or water' - within 20 metres of the Montagu River.⁹⁴ Ignoring Norton Smith's advice, the company had preferred this 'bushman' to the conqueror of Mount Bischoff. If that was not galling, there was more:

While we were at the Montagu Mr Hunt made a remark to the effect that he could tell me how to search for tin. As he had spoken disparagingly of Tasmanians I did not wish to tell him for this and other reasons that I had already found tin but I remarked to Mr Norton Smith...that I had tin in my pocket but that I would not tell him (Mr Hunt). Mr [Norton] Smith asked was it of my own finding and I said yes. Still I wished to be able to say that I had proved it to be tin by some well known test.⁹⁵

Again Smith's study came in handy. At Robert Quiggin's house at Table Cape (the settlement later renamed Wynyard) he placed some crushed ore in the base of a broken flower-pot and, holding it at an angle to prevent leakage, reduced the first Mount Bischoff ore with a blacksmith's furnace.⁹⁶

I then paid a visit to the Reverend Richard Smith and handing him a piece of the metal asked him what it was and after some ineffectual guessing on his part I told him it was tin, and told him that I had found a mine....On returning to Mr Quiggin's I found him at home and handing him a piece of the metal jokingly asked him whether it was lead zinc or silver when he placing it between his teeth said it was tin and that he knew by its crackling when bitten and that a worker in tin had once told him that this is a certain test.⁹⁷

'We will have a good tin mine', Smith had predicted to his reverend namesake, with typical restraint.⁹⁸ He would have, arguably, the greatest tin mine in the world.

⁹³ *ibid*

⁹⁴ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company, OD42, 9 April 1872, VDL47/1 (AOT)

⁹⁵ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁹⁶ *ibid*. Smith describes how to smelt tin with a blacksmith's forge in a letter to Thomas Cowle 19 March 1881, NS234/2/7 (AOT).

⁹⁷ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

⁹⁸ *ibid*

Opening the Mount

In September 1872 chopsticks primed with pork, chicken, rice and stewed oysters clicked to the coupling of 'Table Cape' and 'Hellyer' instead of 'Brandy Creek' and 'Nine Mile Springs' in the Launceston Joss House. The 'celestials' were heading west. The smell of sacred kerosene bit the nostrils as, upon a floor sprinkled with brandy, tea and other condiments, a brace of alternately rounded and flat-ended wooden blocks were tossed down in consultation with the astrologist.

He knew better than to send men to Kay's new 'Hellyer' diggings in early spring — it was far too wet for work.⁹⁹ Further upstream, however, Smith battled the conditions. Ironically, having given up hope of finding Emmett's elusive gold matrix with which to fund development of the tin, for months he had been opening his own 'Eldorado' in comparative anonymity.

Lessons of the Penguin debacle are evident in Smith's handling of the Mount Bischoff discovery. He was determined to maintain control of the new mine. Having applied for four 80-acre mineral sections, he funded all the early work himself by selling 160 acres of land containing valuable blackwood at Gawler (a transaction on which he apparently lost 15 shillings per acre) and taking out an overdraft at the Union Bank.¹⁰⁰ It is at this point that Horner, writing in 1940, makes a surprising extension to the Victorian imagery, one which was not absorbed by later writers or even repeated in Horner's own retellings of Smith's life:

He [Smith] bought two sections on the mount, and there is a characteristic story about his purchase of the second. To secure it he had to sell a block of land on the Forth [actually it was on the Gawler River], but when he issued a cheque for the necessary amount it was dishonoured. At once he set out to see the man who had acted as his agent, walking seventy miles in the twenty-four hour day with a short

⁹⁹ 'Movements of the Chinese Diggers', *Cornwall Chronicle* 25 September 1872

¹⁰⁰ James Smith, 'Mr Smith at Gladstone', *Examiner* 7 September 1886

rest. The matter was soon settled, as his man had simply delayed paying in the money.¹⁰¹

Smith's apocryphal 'long march' is the act of a Livingstone, who reputedly strode 50 miles (80 kilometres) in a day from a town in Essex to London and back,¹⁰² an initiation test, perhaps, for his 30-year African marathon. Smith's agent was Colonel Andrew Crawford, who lived at Deyrah, Castra. The return distance from Forth to Castra would have been at most 30 miles (48 kilometres), not 70 (112 kilometres), and unless Smith was frightened of injuring his horse on the notorious Slab Road there is no reason for him to have walked when he could have ridden. The preparation work for Smith's prospecting was his leisurely 'exploration' along the Tamar River in adolescence and early adulthood: the 'long march' story is a metaphor for his Victorian stoicism and single-mindedness.

The two tin-bearing sections later became the north and south sections of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, the zinc block was worked by the Don Company, and the antimony section would eventually form part of the West Bischoff Company property. Smith said little to the newspapers or the Van Diemen's Land Company, whom a more naive man might have supplicated immediately in the name of mutual benefit, the first, sketchy report about the tin and antimony appearing more than six months after the discovery was made.¹⁰³ 'Mr Smith is a peculiar man', Van Diemen's Land Company agent Norton Smith divined correctly, '[who] wishes not to have the matter bruited before he is perfectly certain of success.'¹⁰⁴ Thus the little Smith did pass on to Norton Smith assured him of an attentive audience in London. The benefits to the Van Diemen's Land Company of a successful tin operation at Mount Bischoff must have been as obvious to Smith as to Norton Smith, who wrote:

¹⁰¹ A Geoffrey Horner, 'Philosopher Smith', *Walkabout* 1 December 1940, p.31

¹⁰² J S Robertson, *The Life of David Livingstone, L L D, the Great Missionary*, Murdoch and Co Ltd, London, 1882, p.17

¹⁰³ *Cornwall Chronicle* 12 June 1872

¹⁰⁴ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD 39, 12 June 1872, VDL 47/1 (AOT)

I should strongly recommend the Court to give...every possible facility for carting the tin out to Emu Bay, thereby making that place the shipping port.

Should the tin turn out well there would soon be a considerable population on the spot, and we must endeavour to get the money, which would necessarily pass from hand to hand at Emu Bay. It is wonderful what change has come over the Penguin, although the silver mines there were only started...¹⁰⁵

...should Mr Philosopher Smith's discovery of Tin Ore turn out nearly as well as he anticipates, the Hills will bring a far greater reward to the company than they do at present.¹⁰⁶

The local agent reiterated Smith's value:

Should the company again employ anybody to prospect for them I should recommend a man of whom something is known and who can be trusted not to shun his work. Philosopher Smith is the best I know as it is not a matter of much consequence to him if he goes a couple or three days on one meal if he find (what he calls) something interesting. On one occasion he was three days without food on another five with one meal a day, this man however does not care to work for wages although he is very glad of assistance in the shape of rations etc, his principle being that if he finds anything good he ought to be a partaker in it and that if he finds nothing he ought not to be paid.¹⁰⁷

The brawny oarsmen whose flat-bottomed barques powered Ural gems, metals and weaponry thousands of kilometres on the Volga River system (with portages) to market in St Petersburg and the Crimea,¹⁰⁸ may have got a laugh, had they been told, from the idea that a mere thumbnail on the globe called Tasmania could defy ore

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*

¹⁰⁶ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD 41, 7 August 1872, VDL47/1 (AOT)

¹⁰⁷ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company Court of Directors, OD 40, 10 July 1872, VDL47/1 (AOT)

transport. This was the quandary of the Tasmanian highlands. Standing in 'gloomy grandeur'¹⁰⁹ between Mount Bischoff and the north-western coast was the Nine-Mile Forest, almost as intimidating in the 1870s as when Hellyer cut the so-called Great Western Road through it in 1827.¹¹⁰ The shade of the 60-metre eucalypts ensured a permanent slough.¹¹¹

Behind a phalanx of axes and machetes, a wallowing bullock team inched a dray load of provisions and Hellyer's successors, surveyors Charles Sprent and David Jones, along Hellyer's old track towards Bischoff. For years its only traffic had been woebegone stockmen like the peg-legged Jimmy, bush brew perpetually at the ready as his yapping companions harried some woolly beast back to the dilapidated 'Amsheer' (Hampshire) or Surrey Hills stations, the Van Diemen's Land Company's forgotten outposts.¹¹²

From the Surrey Hills the Smith survey party bashed a new path to Knole Plain, which still left them the most arduous sector of the journey — the final six or seven kilometres to Mount Bischoff itself. Rain and horizontal scrub baffled the theodolite and the survey line for almost a month.¹¹³ The 'gloomy' conditions were the harshest the surveyors had met in their daily bush experience.

They were hardly new to Smith. Despite his legendary moroseness, it is not surprising that his bush adventures would be tinged by a fund of dry humour. David Jones recalled how, slashing at the scrub one day, he (Jones) finally burst into profanity and threw down his axe. 'Nothing could be worse than this', Jones cried. 'Yes it could,' the Philosopher responded. 'It might have had thorns on it.' The surveyor 'broke up'.¹¹⁴

It is unlikely the first mining manager did much 'breaking up' the night he met Mount Bischoff, or thereafter, he and Smith having spent more than seven hours clawing their way in from Knole Plain in the dark. William Morgan Crosby was chosen for his personal qualities, for he had little mining experience. Far from autocratic, he was a

¹⁰⁸ Thomas William Atkinson, *Oriental and Western Siberia*, Hurst and Blackett, London, 1858, pp.14-5

¹⁰⁹ George Washington Walker, in Backhouse and Tylor, *The Life and Labours of George Washington Walker*, p.123

¹¹⁰ Binks, *Explorers*, p.78

¹¹¹ See S B Emmett, 'Our Western Country', *Examiner* 8 May 1875.

¹¹² *Cornwall Chronicle* 16 April 1875, p.4

¹¹³ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)



(Top) Original Mount Bischoff mine manager William Crosby in old age in 1901. (Ronald Smith photo)

(Bottom) Smith's far north-western equivalent Skelton Buckley Emmett. (Archives Office of Tasmania)

natural leader of men nonetheless, a leader by example. He believed in 'self-determination', citing as vindication of this Smith's hunch about prospecting at Mount Bischoff against his (Smith's) 'better judgement'.¹¹⁵ Crosby engendered a fierce loyalty in his hardy charges. This and his talent for carpentry and mechanical invention (he had the economical, improvisational style of a Cornish mining 'captain') were important in the pioneering phase at Bischoff. Crosby had a strong sense of duty and saw eye to eye with Smith, ensuring that the owner's interests would be safe in his absence. There would be no Stephens or English mismanaging Bischoff.

Patience was important too. Small achievements at Mount Bischoff were measured in months rather than hours or days. Kay's Hellyer diggings, a slosh of sluiceboxes and vegetable gardens, waxed and waned between the discovery of Bischoff tin and the first cradling of its wash-dirt a year later, like a meteor flitting across the face of the rising sun. The struggle that lay ahead of the miners was enormous. The western highlands seemed invariably cold, wet and dismal: hell on earth by most reckoning. There were no roads, no access to a port and no likely government help.

In Smith's favour was the perceived emerging value of the property. During the first few months of work it was proclaimed one of the richest tin mines on earth.¹¹⁶ By then the discoverer was receiving offers to buy or work the mine. Optimistic reports about the Queensland tin mines, the flotation in Melbourne of the Tasmanian Charcoal Iron Company to work the iron mines on the Tamar and the high price of tin made this the right time to market his big project.

At Thomas Just's suggestion, in April 1873 Smith arrived in Melbourne armed with a letter of introduction from W B Dean which proclaimed his integrity and his inexperience in mining business.¹¹⁷ The island network looked after its own: Just, W G Lempriere and John Quiggin figured prominently in negotiations. Dean had presumably established mining contacts during his years as one of the pioneer miners on the Mersey coalfield. Lempriere was brother of the Tasmanian Charcoal Iron Company legal

¹¹⁴ 'Waratah', *Daily Telegraph* 21 December 1903, p.6

¹¹⁵ W M Crosby to Smith 6 July 1875, no. 316, NS234/3/4 (AOT)

¹¹⁶ 'The Tin Mines', *Cornwall Chronicle* 28 July 1873

manager. Just was that company's managing director in Tasmania, as well as being *Cornwall Chronicle* proprietor.¹¹⁸ John Quiggin was a Melbourne shipping agent used by Smith and Forth merchants, and brother of Smith's associate Robert Quiggin. Naive as he may have been, Smith knew to stick to his guns. 'I have had offers for working the mine,' he reported in the week following his arrival,

but have not concluded terms as it is very necessary to be very cautious. In the mean time I am finding out as much as possible who the right men are and from what I can conjecture I think matters can be brought to a successful result...¹¹⁹

Final agreement depended upon a tour of inspection by William Dick, whose island visit - and especially the part played in it by his shady companion Hodgson - satisfied neither Smith nor his suitors.¹²⁰ The Tasmanian would not budge from his ambitious £60,000 nominal capital. His proposed Waratah Tin Mining Company partners judged the Mount Bischoff venture too risky and expensive.¹²¹

Smith now determined to form a company in Tasmania or take out an overdraft to finance the mine himself. He induced Launceston solicitor William Ritchie,¹²² already an established mining figure (and a Penguin silver shareholder), Colonel Andrew Crawford and James Cowle to accompany him to Mount Bischoff.¹²³ The trip did not begin propitiously for Ritchie: at the Hampshire Hills he fell from his horse, sustaining a hip injury which bothered him for the rest of his life. He was so impressed, however, by samples Smith chipped away with a hammer and gad that he quickly came to terms and, after word was spread in Hobart Town, the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company was born on 1 August 1873.

¹¹⁷ Smith to Mary Jane Love 19 April 1873, no. 130, NS234/5/1; W B Dean to E Henty 19 April 1873, no. 141, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

¹¹⁸ For Thomas Just's version of proceedings see 'Tasmania and its Resources: Tin', *Cornwall Chronicle* 11 August 1875, p.3.

¹¹⁹ Smith to Mary Jane Love 24 April 1873, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

¹²⁰ ? to John Quiggin, 26 June 1873, no. 165, and 5 July 1873, no. 172, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

¹²¹ Thomas Just to Smith, 12 June 1873, no. 157/8, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

¹²² See R M Green, 'William Ritchie (1832-97)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.33-4.

¹²³ For William Ritchie's description of the trip see his letter to H Bland, Van Diemen's Land Company, 11 August 1873, VDL24 (AOT).

Smith would remark years later how glad he was that he had benefited his fellow Tasmanians by forming the company there, but at the time registering a £60,000 concern locally was a nerve-racking affair, with the spectre of the Penguin silver mine being raised by opponents. As it turned out the shares sold healthily, particularly after the display of several tin monoliths in Hobart (the largest 40 kilograms) which had been packed out from the mine. Perhaps Helena Fenton's premonition more than a decade earlier that he would find gold in lumps as big as a human head had been vindicated.

At 46 years of age, James Smith stood astride Tasmania's infant mining industry. He had reached a position of power and wealth (and, soon, status as well) unprecedented by a Tasmanian prospector. Calls for recognition of his efforts had been made in 1859 and 1868, even before a payable mine had resulted from them; he would henceforth be held up as a model of national industriousness and public benevolence. The conditions of the sale guaranteed Smith a certain amount of control of the Mount Bischoff mine. He effectively occupied two directorships: his own position was permanent so long as he held 1,000 shares in the company, and he had the power to choose another director (he nominated Andrew Crawford). This meant, theoretically, that Smith needed the support of only two of the five additional *elected* directors - William Ritchie, Richard Green, William Hart, Alex Webster and Thomas Giblin, the last pair being the only Hobart men - to win a vote. He would have known all these men already, his acquaintance with Green extending back to the early days on the Tamar River.¹²⁴ Moreover, Smith seems to have continued to direct mining operations through Crosby, suggesting that the businessmen on the board deferred to his practical knowledge (William Ritchie had recently called Smith 'probably the most thoroughly practical geologist and mineralogist we have in the colony'¹²⁵). It would prove to be a fragile status quo. Smith did not regard his healthy payout of £1,500 cash and 4,400 paid-up shares as financial security — and with good reason, as the company's shares would struggle for several years. After preliminary expenses, it had £5,910 with which to begin operations, a tiny fraction of the amount it would spend securing the first dividend.

¹²⁴ Green, 'William Ritchie (1832-97)', p.33

¹²⁵ William Ritchie to H Bland 11 August 1873, VDL24 (AOT)

There was no doubt, however, that Smith had found Tasmania's 'gold'. On his summer constitutionals S B Emmett would have noticed that the glints he was accustomed to finding in the bottom of his pan looked duller than before. His beloved Arthur was turning yellow. If any doubt remained about that river's course the turbid passage of Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company tailings to the ocean would have dispelled it. It signalled not only the death of the 'Hellyer' gold but, with the notable exception of Beaconsfield, the usurpation of that mineral by tin, copper, silver, zinc and iron in Tasmania's economic future.

Traditions of tin mining: Cornwall and Germany

Tin had been under the hammer for more than 5,000 years before it debuted 'down under'. The discovery of cassiterite - 'tinstone' - had a great impact upon the cultural development of mankind. Copper, the predominant working metal before the advent of the less plentiful tin, was too brittle to be flattened or sharpened. Copper alloyed with tin - bronze - was much stronger, however, making far more effective weapons and tools.¹²⁶ The so-called 'Bronze Age' was born, according to Gregory, in Luristan (part of present-day Iran) in about 3,500 BC. For more than 2,000 years bronze would be the 'cornerstone' of industry and art.¹²⁷

Europe remained in the 'Stone Age' for the first of those two millennia, until from western Asia the new technology spread via the great trade routes up the Danube River valley and across the Mediterranean via Crete. This encouraged Europeans to search for their own mineral deposits. Tin and copper were identified in Spain, Portugal, England, Austria and Bohemia. Deposits in the last two regions were smelted using Middle Eastern methods,¹²⁸ a technique which was introduced by Bohemia to the

¹²⁶ Yip Yat Hoong, *The Development of the Tin Mining Industry of Malaya*, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, p.2

¹²⁷ Cedric E Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, Swets and Zeitlinger, Lisse, Netherlands, 2001, pp.17-8

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p.20

custodians of Cornwall's valuable copper and tin deposits.¹²⁹ Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans were Cornish customers at an early stage of Europe's three-thousand-year-old world metal trade, the Romans eventually securing a monopoly interest by conquering Britain.¹³⁰

In the middle ages, weaponry (cannon balls and barrels, for example) and agricultural tools still occupied the artisans, but pewter ware, church bells and other applications helped make tin one of England's main exports.¹³¹ The demands of the Industrial Revolution - tin was needed for tinplate, solder, ball-bearings, machine parts, bridges, buildings, railways, to name but a few uses¹³² - spiralled way beyond known European tin resources, prompting the plunder of the timely alluvial discoveries in Australia and south-eastern Asia (an age-old tin producer), especially Malaya (now Malaysia), which soon dominated the world market.¹³³

Long before that development, however, over the course of centuries, Celtic Cornwall and ethnically more complex 'Germany', especially Saxony, Bohemia and the Harz Mountains, had become recognised as important metal-mining centres. Many similarities mark the Cornish and German mining traditions. Both are highly charged with spiritual belief and superstition. Hollywood has turned the sewers of Vienna into *film noir*.¹³⁴ The interplay of distorted shadows at the beam of the miner's lamp, the ominous rumbling of shifting earth and the creak of timberwork, the eerie echo of voices, blasting, digging and water dripping, and the stifling atmosphere of underground galleries or drives, has many more possibilities. Given the inherent danger and isolation from the surface world (many miners were virtually nocturnal, not seeing daylight for six consecutive days), it is no wonder that a separate mythology was developed to express the fears, mysteries and solidarity of their profession.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p.21

¹³⁰ *ibid*, pp.17-8

¹³¹ John T Thoburn, *Tin in the World Economy*, Edinburgh University Press, 1994, p.48

¹³² *ibid*, p.47. In the twentieth century, tinplate, used especially in canning foods, placed the biggest demand on tin production. Tin alloys (particularly tin mixed with lead, aluminium or copper) had diverse application, for example, in soldering, engine bearings, gunmetals, pump bodies, cymbals and bells (Hoong, *The Development of the Tin Mining Industry of Malaya*, p.1).

¹³³ Thoburn, *Tin the World Economy*, pp.47-9

The German underworld featured the *Berggeister*: mountain goblins, earth spirits, mine ghosts and gnomes whose job it was to watch over the treasures of the earth.¹³⁵ Some mining spirits were benevolent. The Cornish Jack o' Lanterns shone over rich lodes of ore, and the *Bergmonch* (literally 'mine monk'), a ghostly mine inspector who continued to command the subterranean world after leaving the living, warned German miners about impending danger. Others were dangerous themselves. Agricola (see below) reported that in the Rosenkrantz mine at Annaberg a *Berggeist* killed a dozen workers, forcing the abandonment of the enterprise.¹³⁶

Libations were made to the wizened Cornish Tommy Knockers, or Knackers,¹³⁷ believed to be departed souls between heaven and hell,¹³⁸ since they could swing either way, being vindictive or just mischievous. Another type of goblin or gnome, the German *Guteli* or *Cobalos* (borrowed from the Greek), like the Tommy Knockers mimicked the miners but were harmless unless provoked.¹³⁹ Patron saints were also enlisted. Trust in a God who would deliver the miners from cave-in sustained the courage of many. Saint Barbara became a patron saint of miners because the abrupt visitation of heaven upon her wicked father reminded them of their constant danger from collapsing earth.¹⁴⁰ (Miners' devotion to Saint Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary, apparently stems from a medieval analogy that Mary was silver to Christ's gold, giving 'motherlode' - Anne's womb, the source of these very precious metals - a new meaning.¹⁴¹) The traditional German miner's greeting of '*Gluck auf!*' translates as 'Good luck!' or 'God speed you!'¹⁴² Germany's most significant spiritual figure, Martin Luther, the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation leader, reconciled scripture and science in a way that many clerics would not acknowledge even three centuries later. Saxon-born Luther was the

¹³⁴ *The Third Man* (1949), a Graham Greene screenplay directed by Carol Reed and starring Orson Welles

¹³⁵ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.818

¹³⁶ *ibid*, p.175

¹³⁷ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.125

¹³⁸ Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.162

¹³⁹ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.818-9

¹⁴⁰ Michael Walsh (ed.), *Butler's Lives of Patron Saints*, Harper & Row, San Francisco, 1987, p.63. See also Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.143; and Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.457.

¹⁴¹ Walsh, *Butler's Lives of Patron Saints*, p.53

¹⁴² Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.185

son of a copper miner. According to Wolfgang Paul, in fossils embedded in the Mansfeld copper schists, he recognised evidence of geological change consistent, he believed, with the Biblical flood (fish fossils suggested that once there had been water where now was land).¹⁴³

The German mining tradition retained a progressive scientific bent. The 'father of mineralogy'¹⁴⁴ was a sixteenth-century Saxon named Georg Bauer, who called himself Agricola. His 1556 treatise *De Re Metallica, Libri XII* remained the standard text in this field for two centuries, and was even accorded great respect when it was finally translated into English in 1912.¹⁴⁵ Had Smith opened the German copy he may have been surprised to see depictions of mining appliances and techniques, such as the horse whim and the washing of tin in a sluicibox, which he himself had used or was familiar with three centuries later.¹⁴⁶

Not that technology had stood still. Germany and Cornwall could both claim their share of innovations which were chiefly necessitated by expansion into underground lode mining. Fifteenth-century Germany produced the breakthrough process of separating silver from copper, which vastly increased the profitability of those metals,¹⁴⁷ as well as improved smelting furnaces¹⁴⁸ and, probably, blowpipe assaying.¹⁴⁹ In about 1638, German miners introduced blasting powder to England, although it took another half century to establish its regular use in Cornwall.¹⁵⁰ While the haulage of ore and the development of better rock drills occupied engineers such as the outstanding Cornishman Richard Trevithick,¹⁵¹ the mines of the Harz Mountains built a reputation for their advanced operating methods which attracted students from elsewhere in Europe.¹⁵²

¹⁴³ *ibid*, pp.333-4 and 342

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.33

¹⁴⁵ Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.45

¹⁴⁶ See Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, pp.210 and 216.

¹⁴⁷ Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.44

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*

¹⁴⁹ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.161

¹⁵⁰ Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.121

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p.122

¹⁵² *ibid*, p.45

Aside from a colourful vocabulary, Cornwall's most famous gifts to the mining world were its beam engine and boiler, and a benevolent employment and welfare system. Drainage had become the limiting factor as mines were sunk deeper. The Cornish beam engine, which resulted from the accumulated efforts of numerous engineers, including Trevithick, became world-famous for its simplicity, economy and efficiency as the linchpin of the Industrial Revolution.¹⁵³ As late as 1955 a trademark vaulted stone engine-house still pumped out honeycombed Cornish granite,¹⁵⁴ long after those of Australian fields such as Burra, Moonta and the famously wet Tasmania mine at Beaconsfield lingered like monolithic Druid stones or were redeveloped as museums.

The ingenious tribute system gave the Cornish miner autonomy and incentive within the confines of the mining company. The tributers, according to Blainey, were 'aristocrats among miners'.¹⁵⁵ They formed their own work parties, which tendered for contracts to work particular patches of ground. The company paid them an agreed share of the value of the ore raised. The higher the estimated value of the ground and the easier its working appeared to be, the lower the share offered to the party. If the patch then proved unexpectedly rich, the workers took the reward; if it was unsustainably poor (if it would not pay wages) the party could surrender the contract without penalty.¹⁵⁶ The harder they worked, the more money they made, and the lottery of the lucky strike kept them keen: this is about as close as miners got to recapturing the abandon of the gold rush digger.¹⁵⁷ Another important measure was the lead or copper bonus system, which was adopted at the Wallaroo, Moonta and Broken Hill Proprietary mines. This paid the miner a 'sliding bonus' which allowed him to share in the company's profit when the metal in question reached a high price.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³ Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.111; Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, pp.640-1

¹⁵⁴ Gregory, *A Concise History of Mining*, p.45

¹⁵⁵ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.121

¹⁵⁶ Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p.55

¹⁵⁷ Payton, *The Cornish Miner in Australia*, p.128, illustrates that, conversely, ill fortunes at the gold rushes could make a very down-in-the-mouth digger of a Cornishman who already missed his beloved engine houses and the regular paypacket of tributing.

¹⁵⁸ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.299

These incentives generally benefited the company. While the tribute system allowed some devious miners to steal pockets of ore, it kept them under the 'thumb' of management, as Payton describes:

...[its] greatest feature...was that it tended to set miner against miner, forcing the tributer to compete against his fellows...for pitches [patches of ground] offered to the lowest bidder. This, more than anything, helped to frustrate the growth of trade unionism in the industry...¹⁵⁹

Another form of security within the Cornish tradition was a paternalistic welfare system for miners and their families. South Australia's Wallaroo and Moonta Mining and Smelting Company, under the bell-topped monarch Captain Henry Hancock, provided the blueprint for many large Australian mining companies and metallurgical plants.¹⁶⁰

Aside from employment conditions, by the nineteenth century the clear difference between the Cornish and German mining systems was in training and education. The familiar designation of the Cornish 'practical miner' denoted a man educated in mining on the job, steeped in the Cornish traditions but generally ignorant of scientific mining principles.¹⁶¹ Until 1880 most of Australia's large mines were managed by Cornish 'captains', some of whom, like Hancock (who was actually born a 'Devon Dumpling', but accepted as 'near enough' to a Cousin Jack¹⁶²), were progressive and innovative. Some of the older Cornish immigrants, however, who had had no formal mining education, would not budge from the old ways. These men were often deficient in the metallurgical skills needed in gold extraction, since much smelting of Cornish metals had taken place in Wales and a large, cheap workforce of 'bal-maidens' - women who undertook manual ore-dressing, using 'hand jiggers' - had been available locally. They were not available in Australia.¹⁶³

By contrast, in Germany the traditional system of learning on the job had given way, as in America, to a formal education system. A pivotal figure in recognition of the

¹⁵⁹ Payton, *The Cornish Miner in Australia*, p.91

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.298; Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, pp.42-3. See Oswald Pryor, 'Henry Richard Hancock (1836-1919)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, University of Melbourne Press, 1972, pp.333-4.

¹⁶¹ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.244

¹⁶² Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p.40

German model was the wandering gentleman geologist Alexander von Humboldt, who inspired such botanist explorers as Ludwig Leichardt and Ferdinand Mueller, the last being dubbed the 'Humboldt of Australia' as that country's most esteemed scientist of his time.¹⁶⁴ (Other nineteenth-century Germans to endow the Australian scientific community included astronomer Christian Carl Rumker, geophysicist Georg Neumayer, zoologists Wilhelm Blandowski and Gerard Krefft, and botanists Richard Schomburgk and Maurice Holtze.¹⁶⁵) Home attributes the disproportionate representation of Germans in Australia's scientific leadership of the 1850s to two factors: the fascination of a generation of German scientists with Humboldt's writings; and the superior German higher educational system.¹⁶⁶ As the result of reform of its university system in the 1810s, during the first half of the nineteenth century Germany produced more university graduates than England and gave them more specialised training:

While the German universities were producing specialists in various fields of science who were well trained to pursue scientific research of their own, in Britain, scientific and technical training remained a much more haphazard affair.¹⁶⁷

Crucially, for mining,

whereas in Britain engineers continued to be trained by informal methods, as apprentices on the job, there emerged in Germany at this period a system of higher technical institutes...that provided a formal education for engineers...¹⁶⁸

Two types of mining school had been established in Germany: the *Bergschule* ('mining school'), which educated the mining workmen; and the *Bergakademie* ('mining academy'), which taught the art and science of mining and also undertook research. The influence of the German academy system was profound. Humboldt, a graduate of the

¹⁶³ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.244

¹⁶⁴ Rod Home, 'Science as a German Export to Nineteenth Century for Australia', *Working Papers in Australian Studies*, no. 104, London, 1995, pp.7-11

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, pp.11, 14-5

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp.16-7

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p.17

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*

Freiburg Academy under the 'father of German geology', Abraham Werner,¹⁶⁹ was the model for the first wave of German scientific emigrants to Australia.¹⁷⁰ Later, when it became recognised that much valuable ore was being lost unnecessarily in Australian mines, German expertise figured in the search for more advanced mining managers and the establishment of Australian mining schools, the breakthrough in this movement being the enlistment of American experts by the Broken Hill Proprietary mine in 1886.¹⁷¹ Clausthal Royal Academy of Mines graduates Ferdinand Krause and George Ulrich both lectured at Australian mining schools and universities, worked as consulting engineers and on the Geological Survey of Victoria.¹⁷² German expertise figured prominently in the development and expansion of the Tasmanian mining industry. Ulrich worked there as a consultant. Gustav Thureau, although less distinguished academically (he left the Clausthal School of Mines in disgrace¹⁷³), served as inspector of mines and government geologist, and the American Robert Sticht (originally conscripted by the Broken Hill Proprietary), who introduced the revolutionary pyritic smelting to Tasmania while metallurgist for the Mount Lyell Company, was another German graduate.

James Smith's sympathies lay in another direction. He probably found Cornish culture - and certainly Cornish mining methods - appealing. The Cornish had 'mining in their blood'. Their piety, independent thought, forthrightness, simple tastes, work ethic and community spirit were compatible with his own, as was Methodism's emphasis on 'self-help and individual improvement'.¹⁷⁴ Smith would have become accustomed to Wesleyan lay preaching on the goldfields, and often attended the Primitive Methodist church at the Forth. The practical, educated-on-the-job Cornish miner may also have represented an 'anti-intellectual' model to which Smith aspired: as discussed previously, the working-man's 'self-education' usually left gaps, since it depended upon what books

¹⁶⁹ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, pp.62 and 88

¹⁷⁰ Home, 'Science as a German Export', p.19

¹⁷¹ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.249; Jan Todd, *Colonial Technology: Science and the Transfer of Innovation to Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.184

¹⁷² Gabrielle L McMullen, "An Able and Scientific Man": Gustav Adolph Hugo Thureau, German-Trained Geologist', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, vol. 11, no. 2, December 1996, p.149

¹⁷³ *ibid*, p.150

¹⁷⁴ Payton, *The Cornish Miner in Australia*, p.7

he could afford or obtain from libraries and friends,¹⁷⁵ making it possible that Smith felt inferior to the university graduate or mining academy man, who had benefited from an opportunity unavailable to him. Although the goldfields were a cultural hotch-potch, the first mining methods he read about in British textbooks are likely to have been Cornish. Their apparent simplicity and economy, and the Cornishman's flair for innovation, would permeate Smith's mining 'philosophy'.

Crosby at the 'coalface'

Crumbling terraces streaked with oxidised metal and reeking of sulphur are all that remain of once famous White Face of Mount Bischoff. It is still relatively white. On a clear summer day the contrasts between the brilliant sky, the resurgent forest sprigged with yellow broom, the corrugated red-brown of a fossicker's shed and the purple veins and sandy gullies of this quarry are remarkable.

That it is a quarry is not to deny the rusted evidence of other mining methods having been tried. The slopes from which tin nuggets weighing hundreds of kilograms were plucked are now littered with machinery, hoses, half-buried wheels and a battery case tossed down like a post-apocalyptic bar-room piano. At the base of the White Face a yellow-green slime seeps from a black hole, the mouth of the main adit which tested the underground ore reserves.

This is the old south section of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company pegged out by James Smith in 1872. It was rich, but not the richest part of the Mount Bischoff treasure trove. That was on the eastern shoulder over the crest of the White Face. The ruined colonnade of the self-acting tram still points the way. It was a different landscape, however, when, in the winter of 1873, a hut and tents huddled around a dam on a gully feeding into Tin Creek, a tiny break in the steeping forest. The original workings were

¹⁷⁵ David Vincent, 'Miller's Improvement: a Classic Tale of Self-Advancement?', in (ed. Michael Shortland), *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p.235

below the hut, the 'new' above it. At an early stage cradles gave way to sluiceboxes. In the absence of the crushing and smelting works necessary to treat complex ore, all Crosby could do was pick off the richest bunches of alluvial ore and wash them clean. Water propelled by a rake flushed the dirt out of the sluice, leaving the heavier tin particles in the dimpled bottom. The ore was then collected, dried in an oven and bagged.

The primary focus of the work at this time was not getting ore to market, but making the mine's 'boundless' wealth evident to Van Diemen's Land Company agent J W Norton Smith, in order that he would persuade his court of directors in London to tap into it with a tramway.¹⁷⁶ William Ritchie, common to both companies (he was the Van Diemen's Land Company's solicitor), also helped by delivering a glowing report on the mine and its potential benefit to the grazing concern, although the value of his judgement might have been questioned by the directors after he described their miserably barren Surrey Hills block as 'some of the finest land in the world'. Ritchie described nuggets of Mount Bischoff tin weighing hundreds of pounds,

but the richness of the alluvial or rather detrital deposit (although wonderful by itself) is nothing compared with that of the enormous lode which appears to cap or to constitute a large portion of the top of the Mount. In one place there is a cliff of fully 20 feet in height and exposing a face several yards in width which appeared completely permeated with the ore...¹⁷⁷

Its potential to be the mine's saviour gave large scale prospecting precedence over the 'dead' work of building infrastructure — which raised the ire of shareholders, and was one of the causes of the company's share slide in 1874.¹⁷⁸ A delay in securing a water right on the Waratah River also contributed to the slow progress in the company's first half year: by the time of the January 1874 general meeting only six tons of ore had been carted out to Emu Bay. This caused unrest among some of the

¹⁷⁶ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

¹⁷⁷ William Ritchie to H Bland, Van Diemen's Land Company, 11 August 1873, VDL24 (AOT)

¹⁷⁸ William Ritchie to Smith 6 December 1873, no. 356, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

shareholders, notably Thomas Just, who was anxious that the company buy its own teams and press on with the tramway between the mine and the falls in order to obtain a permanent water supply.¹⁷⁹

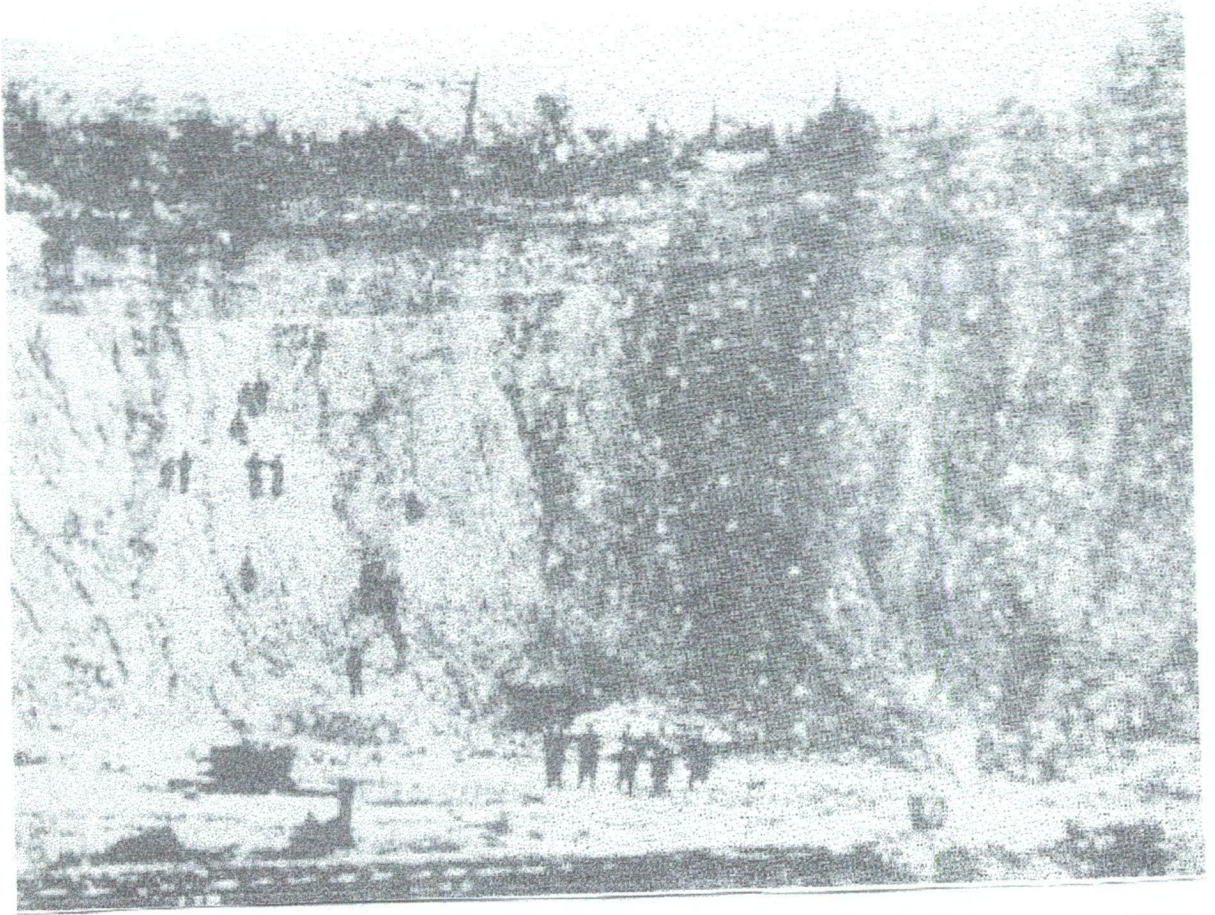
Through the winter nights of 1874 and 1875, while the calico roof of his celery-top-pine hut rebuffed the elements, Crosby sat scratching pay sheets and reports by lantern light as he neared the end of his fifteen-hour work-day. He certainly had an overview of the mine. No longer need he escort visitors to the summit to view the workings; his new residence in the lee of the south-westerlies that drove the sleet and snow was only 60 metres down the mountain from it.¹⁸⁰ In the morning, if the 'Bischoff mist' lifted, from his door he could watch the white water of Waratah Falls forking alongside 'Bog Lane', the pack-track to the open country. Across the sky, Cradle Mountain, Barn Bluff, Mount Murchison and even Frenchmans Cap, the 'liberty cap' which would soon tantalise Marcus Clarke's serialised convicts, greeted him as equals.¹⁸¹ The woods of the Surrey Hills hid from him the mudbaths of teamsters and their cargoes, as painful as the en-route losses were to him when the teams arrived.

Henry Hancock, the celebrated preaching 'captain' of South Australia's Moonta copper mine, commanded his kingdom with bells and a speaking tube from a lookout on a two-storey building, the entire mine coming under his gaze.¹⁸² From Crosby's natural pulpit Hancock might have felt he was preaching to the world. But Crosby, unlike Hancock, did not know of the 'gems' right under his nose. In what looked like an extinct volcanic crater immediately below his hut lay hidden the heart of the Mount Bischoff tin mine. In years to come this natural reservoir would be criss-crossed by rails fanning in from many faces along which workers pushed bogies of ore to the self-acting tram. Another rich ore reserve, the Slaughteryard Gully Face, would be opened up on the western slope of the basin. Where, in Crosby's time, the lode outcropped in boulders at the northern end of the crater, a great pit known as the Brown (or Red) Face would be hollowed out. From his hut he could have marvelled at the ant-like industriousness of

¹⁷⁹ 'Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company', *Cornwall Chronicle* 16 January 1874

¹⁸⁰ 'A Trip to the Tin Mines at Mount Bischoff', *Examiner* 4 April 1874

¹⁸¹ Marcus Clarke, *For the Term of His Natural Life*, Australian Print Group, 1988 (originally published 1874), pp.55 and 75



An extraordinary photo of Mount Bischoff miners suspended by ropes on the nearly vertical walls of the Brown Face, chipping away the ore.

the figures inching its walls, suspended precariously by ropes as they broke ore from a pitface prone to landslides.

Had the failure of a steam engine which drove the pumps not prevented the opening up of the Brown Face in Crosby's time the course of Mount Bischoff history might have been quite different.¹⁸³ After March 1874, however, his work was confined to the poorer southern section. This probably counted as just another day-to-day frustration; and there were plenty of those. Loading of ore and unloading of stores and equipment at Emu Bay was in the lap of the gods, easterly weather making it impossible for the coastal steamer *Pioneer's* rowboat to perform these tasks. While the Mount Bischoff Company awaited a decision on the Van Diemen's Land Company tramway, it lost out on the teamsters it needed in the interim, the most reliable having been secured by Smith's associates Walker and Beecraft, holders of a nearby claim. Bogs, fallen trees and the Wey and Hellyer River fords restricted carting to dry summer months, when broken drays and spilled loads signposted the way and Dead Horse Gully earned its name.¹⁸⁴ Bullocks strained not with their loads but with the digestive apparatus of the mires. 'We heard a most wonderful report,' A M Walker's wife Louisa wrote,

that a party going along the road had seen a hat and he took hold of it
and found a man underneath with a dray and team of Bullocks [sic]. I
dare say by the time you receive this report in town the man will have
been able to put a note in the crown of his hat just as he was sinking to
say he was there.¹⁸⁵

Competition for labour with the Main Line Railway construction and conditions at Bischoff left Crosby with some 'duffers' who tested his own indigestion. 'I do my best and try not to let things trouble me,' Crosby wrote to Smith,

but being of a sensitive disposition I can't entirely prevent it....I was
never nearer striking a man in my life than yesterday it [sic] was a
carpenter. I showed him what to do and he commenced by doing what I

¹⁸² Pryor, *Australia's Little Cornwall*, p.42

¹⁸³ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

¹⁸⁴ 'F E M', 'A Forest Picnic in Tasmania', *Examiner* 16 March 1878

¹⁸⁵ Louisa Walker to Mary Jane Smith 17 January 1875, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

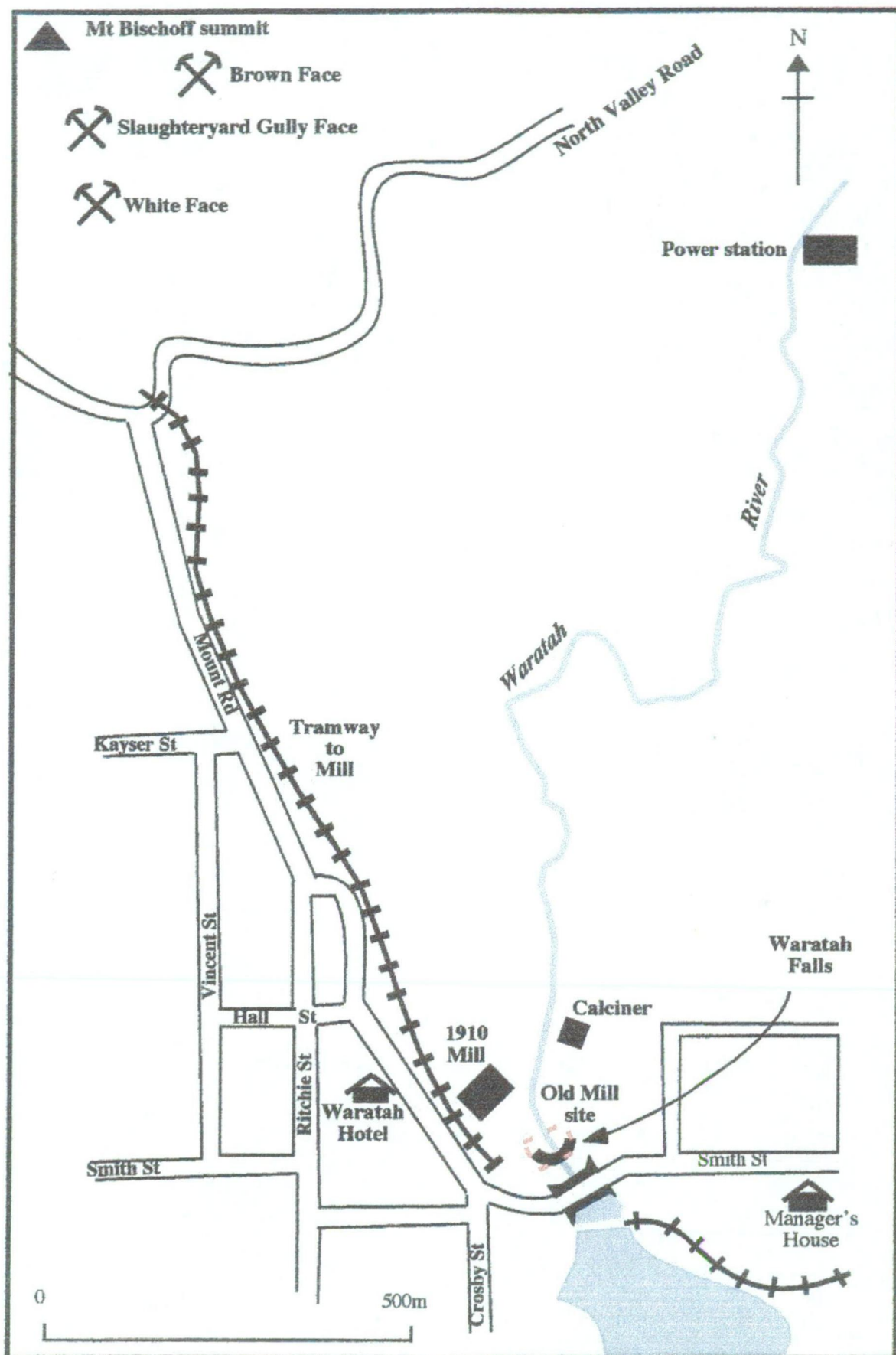


Fig. 7 Waratah and Mt Bischoff

told him not to do. I felt an almost irresistible impulse to knock him over,
and I almost feel sorry that I didn't.¹⁸⁶

Some workers, after achieving competency in tin dressing, left with a litany on snowstorms, labouring in rain and mud and sickening vapours (produced by decomposing vegetation) which hardly served as a recruitment pamphlet. Burning the offending scrub from the Mount not only improved mining, health and morale, but freed the flow of water, helping Crosby marshal an efficient sluicing system consisting of three boxes at different levels.¹⁸⁷ The water which filled the top one was reused in turn by the two below it.

Crosby's ingenuity would be needed elsewhere. Consulting engineer George Ulrich's April 1874 report confirmed what Smith already believed: the key to Mount Bischoff tin production was two kilometres from the Mount at the Waratah Falls.¹⁸⁸ With ample water available there all year round for washing and dressing ore, their work need not be restricted by the low summer rainfall. The falls would also provide motive power to drive crushing machinery and a potential site for smelters, the last piece in the production jigsaw.

In August 1874 the Van Diemen's Land Company directors assented to a wooden-railed, horse-drawn tramway between Emu Bay and Rouse's camp, the inconvenient terminus four kilometres east of the Waratah Falls.¹⁸⁹ The Mount Bischoff Company workforce now swapped sluicboxes for axes. In co-operation with owners of adjoining claims, Walker and Beecraft (later the Stanhope Company) and Cummings and Henry (later the Don Company), they built a horse-drawn tramway out to Waratah Falls and another from there to the open country to meet the Van Diemen's Land Company's.¹⁹⁰ The same arrangement applied to building a reservoir on the Waratah River and forming a rough 'road' between Emu Bay and the Mount. Crosby set to work

¹⁸⁶ W M Crosby to Smith 23 March 1875, no. 140, NS234/3/4 (AOT)

¹⁸⁷ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

¹⁸⁸ George Ulrich, 'The Mount Bischoff Tin Mines: Mr Ulrich's Report to the Directors of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, Launceston', held in Australian Pamphlet Collection, vol. 108, fiche 02, item 1991, National Library (also published in the *Examiner* 18 April 1874)

¹⁸⁹ See Lou Rae, *The Emu Bay Railway: VDL Company to Pasminco*, 1991, pp.8, 20 and 21.

dressing some of the stockpiled ore at the falls safe in the knowledge that Bog Lane, the worst stretch of track between the Mount and Emu Bay, was 'history'.

Launcestonians, meanwhile, watched the rise of their city's greatest landmark of the time. At the corner of William and Tamar Streets, James Hancock erected two reverberatory furnaces connected to a 20-metre-high chimney, the plant henceforth being managed by the company's assayer J L Jenkin. Although the Stanhope Company later proved that smelting could be conducted economically at Mount Bischoff, the big company's decision to build the smelters in Launceston not only obviated carting coal to Mount Bischoff but gained it the business of the north-eastern tin mines. The purpose of smelting is to produce pure tin from tin ore by removing the associated oxygen, iron and silica.¹⁹¹ Arriving from the mine in small bags, the ore was mixed with coal, which inside the furnace acted as a flux.¹⁹² A sustained temperature of about 1000 degrees centigrade liberated the 'slag' from the molten tin, which was then ladled out into cast iron moulds - as ingots - bearing the legend 'Mt Bischoff T M Co' and bound for Britain.

Like a providential beacon, an intense luminous glare lit the former millsite during firings. The one-time miller who had toiled there now commanded a workforce of his own - and its moral well-being. The Mount Bischoff Company management took this assumed responsibility seriously. A letter written in September 1873 when Smith was recruiting some of the first workers for Mount Bischoff shows his sense of duty at work. Explaining that he had had to sack one man for 'refractory conduct', Smith wrote:

I believe that in this matter I have the approval of the rest of the men
though, of course, I pay no attention to this as I do my duty irrespective
of other people's opinion.¹⁹³

There was no vanity in this statement: Smith honestly stated the ethic by which he lived.

In 1829 Van Diemen's Land Company local agent Edward Curr had recommended establishing breweries and distilleries at the Hampshire and Surrey Hills in order to

¹⁹⁰ 'Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company', *Cornwall Chronicle* 15 July 1874

¹⁹¹ 'Our Tin Mines', *Cornwall Chronicle* 28 December 1874

¹⁹² 'A Visit to the Tin Smelting Works', *Devon Herald* 11 and 15 February 1882. For a full description of nineteenth-century tin smelting in a reverberatory furnace, see J Arthur Phillips, *Elements of Metallurgy*, Charles Griffin and Company, London, 1891, pp.518-20.

encourage tenant barley farming on the company's land.¹⁹⁴ He need not have bothered, since agriculture there was doomed and liquor production needed no official sanction. By 1874, when Mount Bischoff's population was 74, including only three women, in 'domestic occupations, presumably housewives',¹⁹⁵ Fields' Surrey Hills stockman Charles Drury appears to have been the 'godfather' of the Mount Bischoff sly grog trade. While he was thus distracted, some of his wayward charges began to reappear surreptitiously as Mount Bischoff dinners, much to his employers' disgust.¹⁹⁶

Although the establishment of a Mount Bischoff police station had been under consideration for two years,¹⁹⁷ in 1875 the 200 residents lacked a constable, a magistrate, a school, a place of worship, a library or reading-room and a resident doctor. The Mount Bischoff Company began to take action. Smith, Crosby, his deputies Charles Hall and Stephen Eddy and company manager Henry Ritchie regarded alcohol as a threat to the fragile settlement.¹⁹⁸ Crosby gleefully drove the first would-be publican out of town as soon as he arrived, and was appalled by the disruption to the community caused by the opening of the Mount Bischoff Hotel in May 1875.¹⁹⁹ Smith believed that introducing the chemist, Rooke, to Waratah, would serve not only a medical purpose but a moral one. 'It is very important,' he wrote,

that some respectable people should establish themselves there.

Magistrates will soon be required as the very name of the law must have a salutary effect in those of the working classes who have a natural tendency to be unruly and there have been several instances of...[trouble?]....at the Mount already.²⁰⁰

¹⁹³ Smith to Mary Jane Love 13 September 1873, no. 160, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

¹⁹⁴ Edward Curr, *Memorandums for Dr Hutchinson on Taking Charge: Being Instructions for the V D L Co's Affairs in V D L During His Absence* (compiled by Joan Bruce), 1991, p.7

¹⁹⁵ Emu Bay district constable Cavanagh to John Forster, inspector of police 14 May 1874, CSD 7/62, no. 1522 (AOT)

¹⁹⁶ Douglas Woolley to the colonial secretary 2 March 1874, CSD 7/62, no. 1522 (AOT)

¹⁹⁷ See correspondence between John Forster and the colonial secretary in 1873 and 1874, CSD 7/62, no. 1522 (AOT).

¹⁹⁸ Henry Ritchie to Smith, 17 February 1876, no. 57, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

¹⁹⁹ W M Crosby to Smith 13 January 1875, NS234/3/4 (AOT); Waratah [Crosby], 'Mount Bischoff Public House', *Cornwall Chronicle* 31 May 1875

²⁰⁰ Smith to Morton Allport, 17 March 1875, no. 130, NS234/2/2 (AOT)

A beneficiary of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute in his youth, Smith now offered an allotment which could house a combined chapel, school and reading-room, a preventative for idle hands turning to drinking and gambling. Hall campaigned to establish a mechanics' institute which, he wrote, would also

bind men in a stronger social union, and enable those who may possess a little talent to bring it to the front and minister in some way either to the amusement or instruction of their fellow men.²⁰¹

Of these men, only Hall would carry the fight into the future. Illness and inexperience would stop Crosby completing his pioneering work at the falls. In September 1875 he announced he could not continue. He had resigned once before, 13 months earlier, when he feared his plan for experimental machinery at the falls would fail. 'My decision has been hastened,' he told Smith on the former occasion,

by remarks made between experienced men who have had letters of introduction to me from Legal Manager and Directors....There has been one here lately who I think is thoroughly experienced in matters that pertain to tin. Remarks that were made by him hastened my decision.²⁰²

At that time, Crosby's self-confidence had also been eroded by the suspicion that the nosiest visiting 'expert', the ex-Penguin mine manager Andrew English, had been sent by the directors to spy on him. He was then reassured and persuaded to continue, but now, in 1875, over-exertion and a severe cold had aggravated complaints that had been brought on years earlier by an attack of scarlet fever, Crosby wrote, and it would take more than a spell in a gentler climate to cure him. Smith claimed that the physical and mental stress Crosby suffered at Mount Bischoff prevented him holding down regular employment after this time.²⁰³ While Crosby's illness was genuine, insecurity probably reinforced his decision to resign.

His withdrawal may have caused some relief among the directors. Clearly Crosby lacked the experience to erect machinery at the falls unaided, and although Ulrich did

²⁰¹ 'Mount Bischoff', *Cornwall Chronicle* 13 December 1875

²⁰² See W M Crosby to Smith, 8 August 1874, no. 232, NS234/3/3 and 12 August 1874, with no. 291, NS234/3/3 - and the letter of resignation W M Crosby to William Ritchie 12 August 1874, no. 238, NS234/3/3 (AOT).

not regard this as a problem, the mining manager was probably nearing the end of his usefulness at Mount Bischoff. He had guided the mine through the opening phase when money, labour and the terrain imposed great difficulties, but now bold initiatives beyond his ability were required.

No doubt Smith deeply regretted losing the services of his trusted friend. Crosby was virtually Smith's own hands at work, tending the mine and nurturing it as his own. In the four years since the discovery on Tin (later Tinstone) Creek, theirs had been the central, controlling partnership, one little changed by the transfer of the property to the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half-way through that period. It is possible that Smith's co-directors were glad to wrest some authority from his (Smith's) hands. For most of the preparatory work was done: now it was time for business. The Launceston smelters were successful — the first smelting in January 1875 had been heralded as the crowning achievement of Tasmanian industry²⁰⁴ — and transport relief in the form of the Van Diemen's Land Company tramway was coming. What was needed now was an enforcer.

The 'King of the Waratah'

Out of the scrub on the brim of the Waratah River gorge rusted stampers poke the sky like organ pipes demolished by Dr Phibes.²⁰⁵ That is the 'new' 1910 Mount Bischoff Company mill. The older crushing plants beneath the falls have suffered worse treatment by the broom plant and fire. Even the 40-head 'Queen of the Mount' battery is dead. Today you can descend to the eastern side of the river and stand on her grave. Her 'King' lies in a Melbourne cemetery. No longer does she beat the reassuring tattoo of prosperity into his formal dining halls on Smith Street, out to the miners' cottages on

²⁰³ Smith notes about Mount Bischoff NS234/2/15 (AOT)

²⁰⁴ 'Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company: the First Smelting', *Cornwall Chronicle* 6 January 1875: 'We have witnessed few such gratifying sights in Tasmania as the ladling out of a regiment of ingots of pure Tasmanian tin.'

(now deserted) Walker and Kayser Streets, and onto the Don Hill, to pacify even after-hours pugilists meeting to settle their differences. The mills have been quiet longer than the bandstand viewing platform from which passing fly-and-drive tourists now admire the golden broom in the gorge, ignorant of the buried energies of share markets and stampers that have synthesised its growth and the dreams of thousands twisted beneath its roots.

In 1880 Ferd Kayser's new 40-head (later increased to 60) mill was heralded as a scientific marvel. Rival mine managers fell over themselves to praise 'the most magnificent mining machinery in the world'.²⁰⁶ Kayser patented his new ore dressing appliances and the shareholders, delighted that their reputed £100,000 investment was now returning £80,000 per year in dividends, purred like the 'Queen' herself.

Heinrich Wilhelm Ferdinand Kayser²⁰⁷ prided himself on being a man of science. Lured to Australia by the gold rushes and the prospect of shedding the poor health of his youth, he had grown up at Clausthal in Germany's Harz Mountains, where the Brocken spectre (a giant shadow cast on clouds by a low sun and haloed by refracted moisture) stalks the mountain tops.²⁰⁸ Kayser was a graduate of the Clausthal Royal Academy of Mines, the second German academy graduate (after his friend George Ulrich) to play a part in Tasmanian mining.

Kayser was a commanding figure with a distinguished beard. Articulate and charming, he had arrived in South Australia in the twilight days of the Burra copper mine of 'Little Cornwall' fame which the Cousin Jacks were abandoning for the Victorian goldfields. In the next decade, Henry Hancock, the famous benevolent despot, would revolutionise Cornish ore dressing at Burra's successor, Moonta, but at this time hand-jiggers, teams of men sizing the ore by shaking it through sieves, were common practice. To many, Cornwall was a byword for simplicity and economy. To champions of

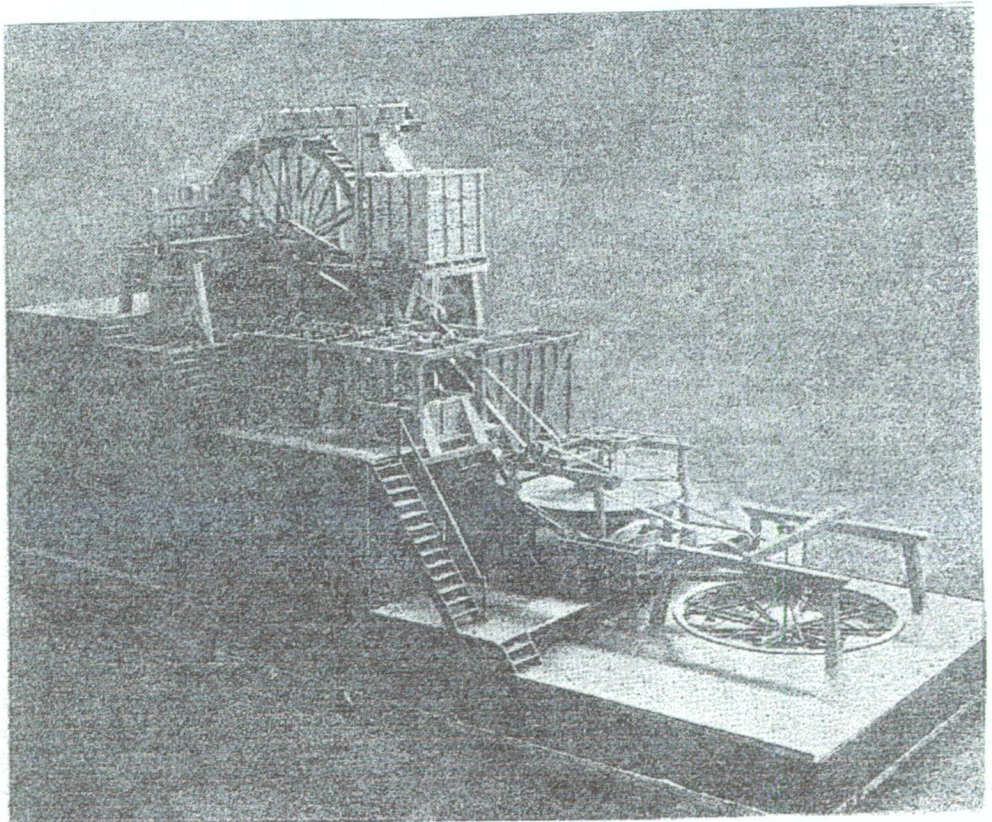
²⁰⁵ Dr Phibes was a mad organist played by Vincent Price in two British movies directed by Robert Fuest, *The Abominable Dr Phibes* (1971), and *Dr Phibes Rides Again* (1972).

²⁰⁶ 'Mount Bischoff', *Tasmanian Mail* 9 February 1880

²⁰⁷ John Reynolds's 'Heinrich Wilhelm Ferdinand Kayser (1833-1919)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp.3-4, is inaccurate. See Nic Haygarth, 'King of the Waratah: Ferd Kayser and the Mount Bischoff Tin Mine', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, September 2001, vol. 48, no. 3B, pp.205-19.



H. W. Ferd Kayser,
General Manager.



Mount Bischoff mine manager Ferd Kayser (Top), and a model of his famous patented ore-dressing machinery (Bottom).

technology like Kayser, on the other hand, the 'cradle of the Industrial Revolution'²⁰⁹ seemed a 'Luddite'. Earl explains that by 1700 the methods used by some Cornish dressing floors

had developed to a point where they remained unchanged...until the twentieth century. The ore was hand picked, broken by hammer into pieces no larger than a fist, and stamped.²¹⁰

Antiquarian Cornish mining methods would become Kayser's favourite hobby horse.

The German reached the Victorian goldfields in 1854, when much of the alluvial ore had been picked out and lode mining – deep sinking – was beginning. The time of the scientist had arrived. The Forest Creek field near Castlemaine yielded him little of its riches, but years later he recalled how it served him as an illustration of simple ingenuity. One day in passing Sailors Gully he saw a party of diggers arrive and start to sink a hole with a long-handled shovel, pick and bucket. The mouth of the hole was two and a half metres across, but a few days later, when they were down about four metres, Kayser was surprised to see that at the bottom of the hole the diameter had shrunk to little more than half a metre, scarcely room on which to stand the bucket. How had they managed the long-handled shovel in this space? The answer was that they had gradually reduced the length of the shovel and pick handles as they dug down. The hole remained a puzzle to the uninitiated.²¹¹

Kayser was introduced to quartz mining on the Devonshire Reef at the head of Eaglehawk Gully, Bendigo. After about a dozen years as a digger on various goldfields he entered mine management, gaining the reputation of being, significantly, 'able and energetic, but expensive'.²¹² At the time of Crosby's resignation he had charge of the Crossover Creek gold mine in Gippsland, but he was considering a lucrative Malayan offer when Smith wrote to Ulrich asking if his (Ulrich's) friend 'Mr Kaiser' was 'at liberty

²⁰⁸ 'Prominent Tasmanian Residents', *Examiner* 8 February 1896

²⁰⁹ Payton, *The Cornish Miner in Australia*, p.7

²¹⁰ Bryan Earl, *Cornish Mining: the Techniques of Metal Mining in the West of England, Past and Present*, D Bradford Barton Ltd, Truro, 1968, p.77

²¹¹ Ferd Kayser, 'Early History of Colonial Mining in Connection with 'Is Scientific Management a Success?', pp.2-3, microfiche held in the Newspaper Room of the National Library, Canberra

²¹² Quartz, 'Mining Notes', *Mercury* 18 December 1879

to undertake the general management of the mine.²¹³ Smith acted under the board's direction:

Mr Smith stated that Mr Kaiser [sic], a German, had been strongly recommended to him by Mr Ulrich as a mining manager. It was decided that Mr Smith should telegraph direct to Mr Ulrich, should Mr Crosby wish to resign, and endeavour to secure Mr Kaiser's services.²¹⁴

Smith had formed a high opinion of Kayser, whom he had previously considered for the management of the (aborted) Mount Ramsay bismuth mine.²¹⁵ Within nine days of Crosby's departure Kayser was settled at Mount Bischoff, commanding a good salary and a large mine.²¹⁶ On the strength of the appointment he married and began to raise a family, investing in a position which would absorb the remainder of his working life and shape a hugely profitable mine.

The Brocken spectre of Kayser would overshadow Mount Bischoff in a way the modest Crosby, domiciled under its summit, never dreamed of doing. While Crosby nurtured the settlement of Mount Bischoff from his hut at the 'coalface', Kayser characteristically ruled the town of Waratah from his mansion at its gates. Crosby had been Smith's manager. Kayser, although effectively a Smith appointee, would make it clear he was the company's. He would also be the catalyst for the withdrawal from the mine of its discoverer. Two decades later Kayser would express his belief in the autonomy of the mining manager:

The only way to carry on mining successfully is to appoint a manager who is able to take the responsibility of his position, and directors, if they are wise, will never interfere in the actual management of a mine, as it is impossible for any gentlemen, however practical they may be, to instruct a manager how to work a mine...²¹⁷

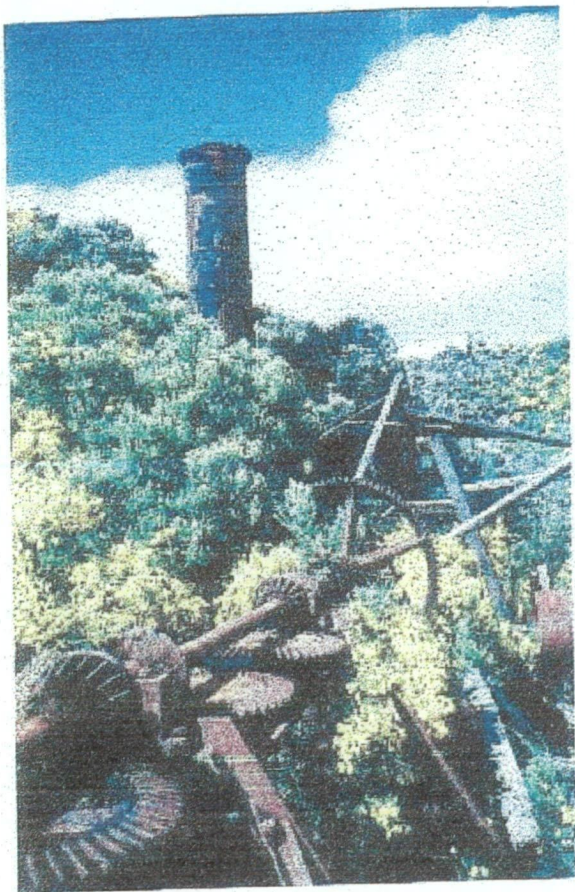
²¹³ Smith to George Ulrich, 28 September 1875, NS234/2/2 (AOT)

²¹⁴ meeting of directors 7 September 1875, Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company minute books, NS911/1 (AOT)

²¹⁵ Smith to George Ulrich, 10 March 1875, no. 172, NS234/2/2 (AOT)

²¹⁶ Crosby's Mount Bischoff diary, NS234/17/4, no. 57 (AOT); Kayser, 'Mount Bischoff', p.345

²¹⁷ Ferd Kayser, 'Tin-Mining in Tasmania', *Proceedings of the Federated Institution of Mining Engineers (Great Britain)*, 1897, p.576



Waratah today. (Top) Kayser's residence, on Smith Street. (Bottom left) Rusting machinery disappearing beneath the scrub of Happy Valley, downstream from the Waratah Falls. (Bottom right) The huge hollow of the Brown Face open-cut, beneath the summit of Mount Bischoff.

He probably held this view already in 1875. Early relations between Kayser and his benefactor were cordial. When, in preparation for his bride, Kayser established himself in the manager's residence, Smith sent flower cuttings for the garden and peameal, and, as was customary for him, apples for the dinner table. Kayser tried to respond in kind when he visited Melbourne. He reported that he could not find cartridges big enough for Smith's gun — perhaps he had had an inkling of events to follow!²¹⁸

The battle of Mount Bischoff

Kayser's appointment prompted a perhaps inevitable rift with Smith as the company now, for the first time, entered fully into the realms of business. He was the first genuine outsider admitted into Smith's Bischoff regime. Kayser's drive and charisma would soon win him recognition as the benevolent despot of Waratah, extending Crosby's moral censorship into a magistracy and what some called the Mount Bischoff Company 'cabal'.

Yet despite his rapport with management, Kayser's early months at Bischoff were marred by poor judgement. He was tactless. The homily of the shrinking handles, which described Crosby's improvisational management style much better than Kayser's, was forgotten when Kayser saw Cornish ore dresser Stephen Eddy's extemporised appliances, Crosby's rough wooden tramway, and mining methods restricted by the availability of equipment and men.

'Washing shed at the Waratah not what I expected to find it,' he wrote to the directors, 'for though the waterwheel is there to save labor with the exception of the trommel everything is done by hand.'²¹⁹ Eddy, who was sacked, must have reminded Kayser of early days at Moonta. His ore dressing scheme was 'poor and expensive',

²¹⁸ Ferd Kayser to Smith 3 March 1876, no. 76, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²¹⁹ Ferd Kayser to Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company directors 31 December 1875, NS234/14/2 (AOT)

Kayser recalled later. 'The hand-jigger and all the old primitive appliances his great grandfather used to work were here collected...'²²⁰

His blunt criticism took no account of the difficulties. He believed Crosby had mismanaged Eddy and that there were 'old mistakes' to correct. Smith and Crosby would never forgive this or the way Kayser bustled in after the pioneering work was done to, as they saw it, take credit for other people's work. ('We may rely on one thing,' Crosby wrote to Smith, 'he will take the credit of anything successful and saddle anything to the contrary on someone else.'²²¹) Nor would they forgive the directors for according him that credit. Crosby also believed Kayser had 'cooked the books' to make his own management look better.²²²

Kayser was equally blunt with the mine employees who, during his adjustment to the new job (he had never mined tin before), must have seemed irritatingly loyal to Crosby and his methods. Stories of harsh supervision and incompetence reached the directors and the newspapers, one outlet being Kayser's assistant Charles Hall, who gave up his anonymous *Examiner* correspondence, arranged by Smith, when he feared Kayser had 'outed' him and might fire him.²²³ Hall's column was possibly Smith's means of attacking the mining manager. In his personal correspondence Smith criticised Kayser's handling of the teamsters, which led to their striking. It had been

very annoying to me and when the other day I remonstrated with him upon the subject he seemed incapable of understanding that there are intelligent and respectable men amongst them, but I suppose most Victorians are too prone to form prejudices...when they come to Tasmania...²²⁴

'The fact is', Smith wrote,

Mr Kayser is unpopular with the men and the horsedriers in particular work unwillingly under his authority...he ought to have more

²²⁰ Ferd Kayser, 'Mount Bischoff', *Proceedings of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, no. IV, 1892, p.346

²²¹ W M Crosby to Smith 22 September 1876, no. 148, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²²² W M Crosby to Smith 13 November 1876, no. 288, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²²³ Charles Hall to Smith 24 June 1876, no. 194, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²²⁴ Smith to J W Norton Smith 26 February 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

discernment than to attribute very serious...[?]. failure of work at other than its true cause. At Mount Bischoff in particular nice tact is required in controlling the ill-minded and in encouraging the well intentioned and this tact I believe Mr Kayser does not possess.²²⁵

Smith was almost incredulous when, after hearing Kayser complain that he did not have enough carpenters and sawyers to finish work in the dressing sheds, he (Smith) found that the best carpenter and some sawyers were then employed improving Kayser's house. Not only that, but Kayser had used the tramway he had condemned to shift blocks of slate to ornament this residence!²²⁶ J W Norton Smith vowed to sell all his shares after observing Kayser's 'extravagant' methods.²²⁷ It was Launceston where the decisions were made, however, not Bischoff, Westwood or Emu Bay, and Kayser would soon win the ear of the directors. Before that happened, his advice that a large, steam-powered crushing machine should be erected at the Mount spotlighted a division about how the company should proceed.

Smith was a cautious man who slowly felt his way in the business world. He had inched into prospecting after first securing property. Over-caution in coming to terms with the Penguin Silver Mining Company had put him at odds with his partners in 1870.²²⁸ Personal loyalty had perhaps been placed before business sense in the retention of Crosby when mechanisation was needed. Now Smith, the practical miner, wanted to inch Mount Bischoff ahead, whereas most of the experienced businessmen were ready to take a bold risk. Admittedly, the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company was in a delicate financial position, a £15,000 overdraft having been incurred by the erection of the smelting works, tramways and other 'dead' work. Shareholders jibbed. Some worried that, should the mine fail, the disposable assets would not meet the liabilities, leaving them to foot the bill. (Tasmania did not promulgate its *Mining Companies No Liability Act*, which freed shareholders from the obligation to pay calls and the company's debts or liabilities, until 1880, nine years after Victoria had set an example to

²²⁵ Smith to Henry Ritchie 28 February 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²²⁶ Smith to William Ritchie 1 March 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²²⁷ J W Norton Smith to Smith, 24 February 1876 NS234/3/5 (AOT)

the other Australian colonies.²²⁹) The falling price of tin exacerbated the company's problems at a time when it needed money to mechanise.²³⁰ How should the company address its debt? James Smith's approach was to erode it slowly by producing the largest quantity of tin possible at the lowest possible cost. He wanted to use the labour-saving hydraulic hose, which had been tested at Bischoff in the previous winter, to break down the ore.

'Hydraulicizing' had come into vogue in 1852 at the Californian rushes, where half-a-billion-dollars-worth (American \$500,000-worth) of gold had been won this way.²³¹ Telescoping pipes pressurised water running downhill into a nozzle which shot a jet of water onto the mineface. Often the water pressure was strong enough to separate the ore from the dirt, both of which were washed into a sluicebox. Ore would then lodge in the riffles of the box. The hose had two main advantages: the miner could stand back from the face, without the danger of rock fall upon him; and it was cheap. Low-grade ore became a paying proposition because the hose was so much quicker, allowing the miner to treat hundreds of cubic metres of gravel in a day, and it required far fewer men than ordinary sluicing. Smith would have combined this treatment with dressing sheds and a small battery utilising the motive power of the Waratah Falls. Ulrich had recommended using this 'first-class washing site' two kilometres from the workings:

The river promises there, even for the most extensive washing and crushing operations, not only a sufficient supply of water but by damming it, higher up its course...the use of machines and appliances - classifiers, jiggers, buddles, etc - that will ensure the satisfactory concentration of the fine tin ore. Besides this, the site possesses another great advantage, namely, of lying near the upper edge of a nearly vertical fall...a feature which...would also permit, if required, the

²²⁸ See Edwin Cummings to Smith 22 July 1870, no. 156; and Grubb to Smith 26 July 1870, no. 157, NS234/3/1 (AOT).

²²⁹ Act no. 18/1880. For the Victorian model, see Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.96.

²³⁰ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

²³¹ William S Greever, *The Bonanza West: the Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848-1900*, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963, pp.50 and 54

re-use of the washing water for the driving of waterwheels and turbines...²³²

Most of the equipment needed for Smith and Crosby's scheme was in place when Kayser started at the mine. The dressing sheds, triangular troughs, self-acting jigger and tramway from the Mount which delivered the ore had been completed. A fifteen-head battery and thirty-foot waterwheel were bought soon after Kayser started, and the dam at the Mount had been extended so the hydraulic hose could function through the dry season. All the new manager had to do, as far as Smith was concerned, was build on Crosby's ground work.

Others wanted to blast the debt away. By February 1876 a majority of directors, plus company manager Henry Ritchie, were in agreement with Kayser. When the mine manager took the boat to Melbourne to his wedding he was authorised to inspect stonebreakers and steam engines in order to make an immediate start on this scheme.²³³

For the first time Smith's opinion had been bypassed, albeit by default. An attack of scarlet fever had caused him to miss both the annual general meeting and the directors' meeting which had voted for the steam engine. Even the company's consulting engineer Ulrich knew that the scheme had been approved ahead of its only permanent director.²³⁴ Smith saw the Penguin silver debacle rearing its head again, with Kayser the new English. Why spend more money at the Mount when the facilities were virtually established elsewhere? Why install a steam engine and dressing sheds at a place where there was insufficient water for such an operation, when there was abundant water and natural motive power at the falls? William Ritchie, at least, laboured under the misapprehension that Crosby had judged that the bulk of the wash would not pay to cart to the falls.²³⁵ Smith was astonished that Kayser had waited until so late in the carting

²³² Ulrich, 'The Mount Bischoff Tin Mines', p.4

²³³ special meeting of directors 24 February 1876, NS911/1 (AOT)

²³⁴ George Ulrich to Smith 6 March 1876, no. 76, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²³⁵ William Ritchie to Smith 15 April 1876, no. 111, NS234/3/5; Smith to W M Crosby 3 August 1876, NS234/2/3; W M Crosby to Smith 22 September 1876, no. 248, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

season to request heavy machinery that would have to be brought from Victoria.²³⁶ 'I shall be completely at issue with Mr Kayser,' he told Ulrich.

He recommends a steam engine, battery, etc on the southern section where there would be no certainty of water for months of every year.

Since I saw him I have taken time to consider whether there would be the remotest chance of such a course being anything like satisfactory, and the more I consider it the more I am compelled to decide against it.²³⁷

The events that followed could hardly be considered a struggle for control of mining operations between Smith and Kayser, since the latter was probably just trying to hold on to his job. It would not have engendered good feeling between them that while Kayser was away tying the knot — a marriage predicated on his job at Mount Bischoff — and seeing to the company's interests, Smith was in Launceston inducing his fellow directors to go back on their word by cancelling the steam crusher. Not only that, but the old firm of Smith and Crosby had been despatched alone to Mount Bischoff to check on the complaints about Kayser's management!²³⁸ Kayser had every reason to feel betrayed and humiliated when this inspection party reported a very unsatisfactory state of affairs at the mine. Ulrich recorded his grievances:

He [Kayser] says he is accused of lavish expenditure...poor washdirt and consequent smaller yields of ore are...considered as his fault, that no fair notice is taken of the part of the expenditure being attached to...repairs of older work and of correcting old mistakes, that he is blamed for dilatoriness in the erection of dressing machines, though no suitable men were available for the work...²³⁹

Unnecessary changes, Smith believed, had been made to Crosby's machinery settings. The ex-manager had had to give Kayser a lesson in using the triangular troughs to

²³⁶ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

²³⁷ Smith to George Ulrich, 29 February 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²³⁸ special meeting of directors 7 March 1876, NS 911/1 (AOT)

²³⁹ George Ulrich to Smith, 4 May 1876, no. 135, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

classify the fine wash dirt.²⁴⁰ A proper jig was needed. Immense heaps of tailings which could have easily been broken down by the hose were being painstakingly treated by ordinary sluicing. Smith wrote in his notes:

A child ought to know that this [using the hose] could have been done.

One man, with the hose could have done more than fifty with shovels and barrows.²⁴¹

Having restored the status quo, Crosby told a board meeting in early April 1876 that 'he [Kayser] had not managed as he ought; that he prevaricated and that we [Smith and Crosby] hadn't confidence in him.'²⁴²

Smith and Crosby stopped short of recommending Kayser's dismissal, hoping, presumably, that their sermon at the Mount had set him on the right course. The Philosopher believed that many shareholders wanted Hall - a comparative novice, but a trusted Smith protege - as mining manager, with Crosby acting as inspecting manager, an arrangement that Smith considered would be 'immensely beneficial' to the company.²⁴³ Smith valued trustworthiness in a manager above skill or experience, particularly at this time when he sought to regain personal direction of mining operations. The Hall/Crosby plan was put before the board at a later meeting in April at which Smith was absent. Without a vote being taken, it was resolved to grant Kayser one month's stay of execution.²⁴⁴

In the meantime, Smith checked with his regular correspondent Hall if things had improved at Bischoff since his visit. He received a sorry tale of mismanagement. Kayser, according to Hall, was leading the mine 'head long to destruction.' This was the final straw. 'I will act promptly in trying to correct what you complain of', Smith told Hall, 'and in this I will have the support of a large number of shareholders...'²⁴⁵ Smith apparently

²⁴⁰ Smith to Richard Green, 16 May 1876, no. 144, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²⁴¹ Smith notes NS234/14/5. For Smith and Crosby's report to the directors, see meeting of directors 10 April 1876, NS911/1 (AOT).

²⁴² W M Crosby to Smith, 17 April 1876, no. 113, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²⁴³ Smith to Richard Green 16 May 1876, no. 144, NS234/2/3 (AOT); Smith to William Ritchie 27 April 1876, no. 105, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²⁴⁴ William Ritchie to Smith 22 April 1876, no. 121, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²⁴⁵ Smith to Charles Hall 22 April 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

thought Hall's letter spoke for itself. He did not pen what he thought: 'For my own part I would get rid of K first...', he told Crosby.²⁴⁶

How things changed during that month. More than a century later the written correspondence alone can only hint at the conflict. Did Smith wonder if perhaps Kayser was a mesmerist, or whether someone had spiked his own raspberry vinegar? How else could Kayser be in the company's good books; criticism of the mine manager be dismissed by the board as idle gossip and malice; Hall be turning into Kayser's defender;²⁴⁷ Ulrich deny ever recommending the falls as a work site (he claimed he had specified only 'near a waterfall'²⁴⁸); Crosby sever all ties with Mount Bischoff; and the board imply that Smith and Crosby were Kayser's persecutors? The apparent cause of this abrupt about-face was the rise in ore production to 55 tons at the end of the carting season in April — when Smith believed 60 was a satisfactory *spring* monthly return.

It seems that the gift of the gab saved Kayser, as if this silver-tongued champion of German efficiency had promised a future only he could deliver. He spoke to the hip pocket of the company directors in Launceston, some of whom had never even seen Bischoff, his long mining experience and firm hand reassuring them in a way Crosby's management probably never had.²⁴⁹ It seems that to the majority of directors he - not Smith or Crosby - was the man to turn tin ore into money. Mount Bischoff's ex-champions smarted with betrayal. 'If Mr Crosby had died instead of being convalescent his memory might have been overwhelmed with praise,' Smith noted caustically. 'As to the insinuation that Mr Kayser has been unfairly treated,' he wrote, 'I...would like to know why it is 'feared' that I treated him unfairly.'²⁵⁰ 'So Mr Hall has seen the error of his ways,' Crosby mused to Smith.

Not a bad idea was it that whilst we kept quiet the whole community
were raising a hue and cry against K and then when we had taken time
to see how matters really were before censuring they then turn about

²⁴⁶ Smith to W M Crosby 24 May 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²⁴⁷ For Hall's about-face, see Charles Hall to Smith 30 May 1876, no. 168; 27 June 1876, no. 194; and 29 August 1876, no. 237 NS234/3/5 (AOT).

²⁴⁸ See George Ulrich to Smith 22 May 1876, no. 159, and 25 June 1876, no. 190, NS234/3/5; and Smith to George Ulrich 3 June 1876, NS234/2/3 (all AOT).

²⁴⁹ Henry Ritchie to Smith 30 November 1875, no. 524, NS234/3/4 (AOT)

and consider K the man after all. I don't believe in persecuting him but being appointed to go there with you for a certain purpose I went and acted conscientiously.²⁵¹

There was no conspiracy to oust Smith or Crosby, just a falling into line with the policy determined by the directorship. While Ulrich and Smith may have had a simple misunderstanding about using the Waratah Falls as a worksite, Hall recanted in order to save his own job; his loyalty switched from Smith to Kayser, the victor in the struggle. He became Kayser's firmest ally: in 1881 he would berate Smith for repeating some of his (Hall's) earlier protests that were now an embarrassment to him.²⁵² By then the opening up of the fabulously rich Brown Face at Mount Bischoff would have assured Kayser of the board's continuing support.

Smith's influence had been severely weakened. As the moral 'owner' of the Mount Bischoff mine and the only practical miner among the directors, he had enjoyed a unique position. Now the set-up had changed. Kayser had usurped his direction of operations by establishing a direct link to the board. Smith had been cut out of the loop, so to speak, and now had to stomach mining methods which he believed damaging to the company's and his own interests. He had lost control of the mine.

Smith felt betrayed by Kayser and, more significantly, by his co-directors. On 17 May 1876 he tendered his resignation from the board, surrendering a directorship that was his for life.²⁵³ He regretted, he wrote, the directors' inability to get the facts by visiting Mount Bischoff; and their acceptance of casual observations over those of Bischoff's most senior students, Crosby and himself. In a second letter Smith's disappointment spilled out: 'I could no longer endure the torture of being a director in connection with the present mining management.'²⁵⁴

The board implored Smith to reconsider, expressed regret when he declined to do so, then got on with the job of damage control. Andrew Crawford, Smith's former

²⁵⁰ Smith notes NS234/14/2 (AOT)

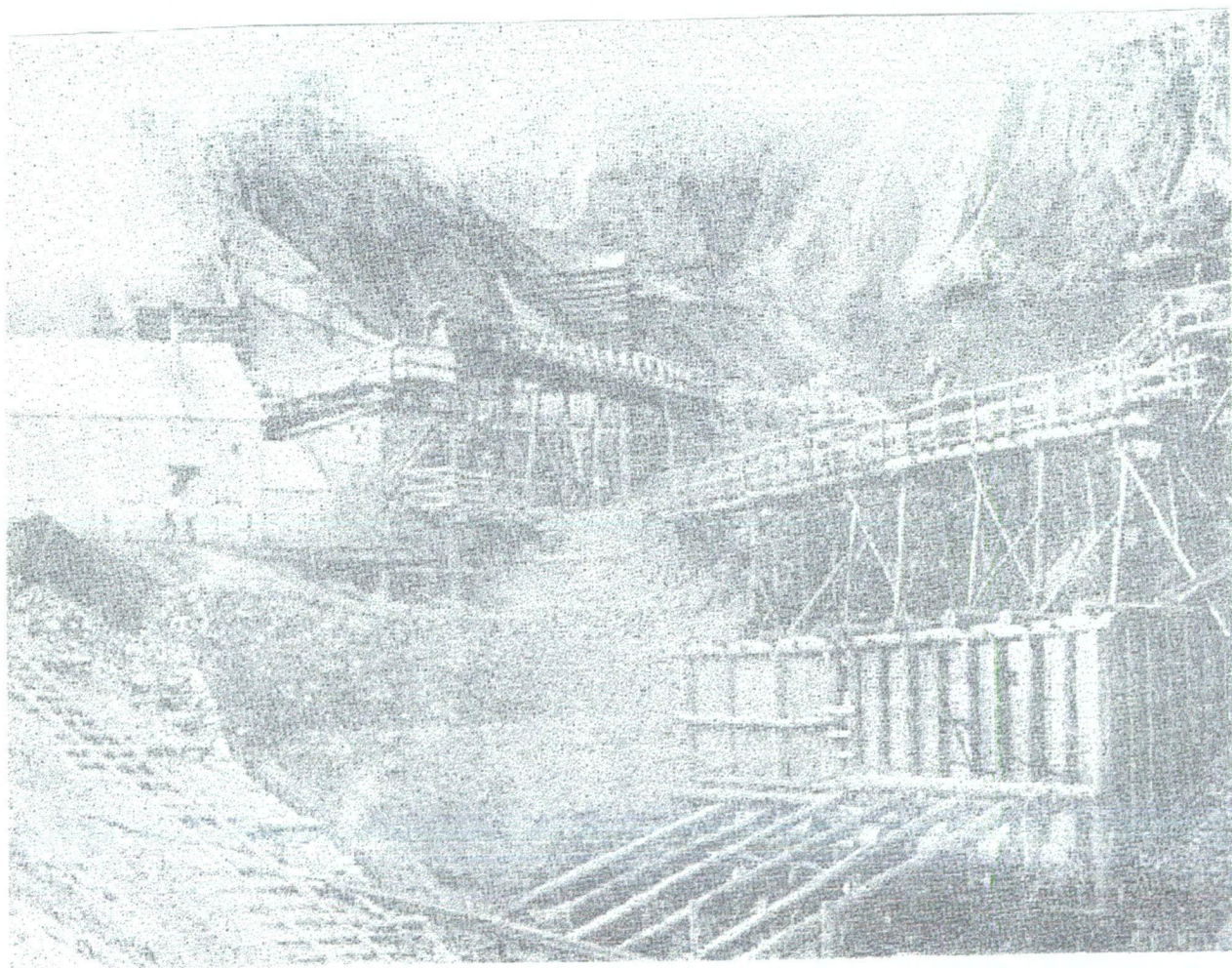
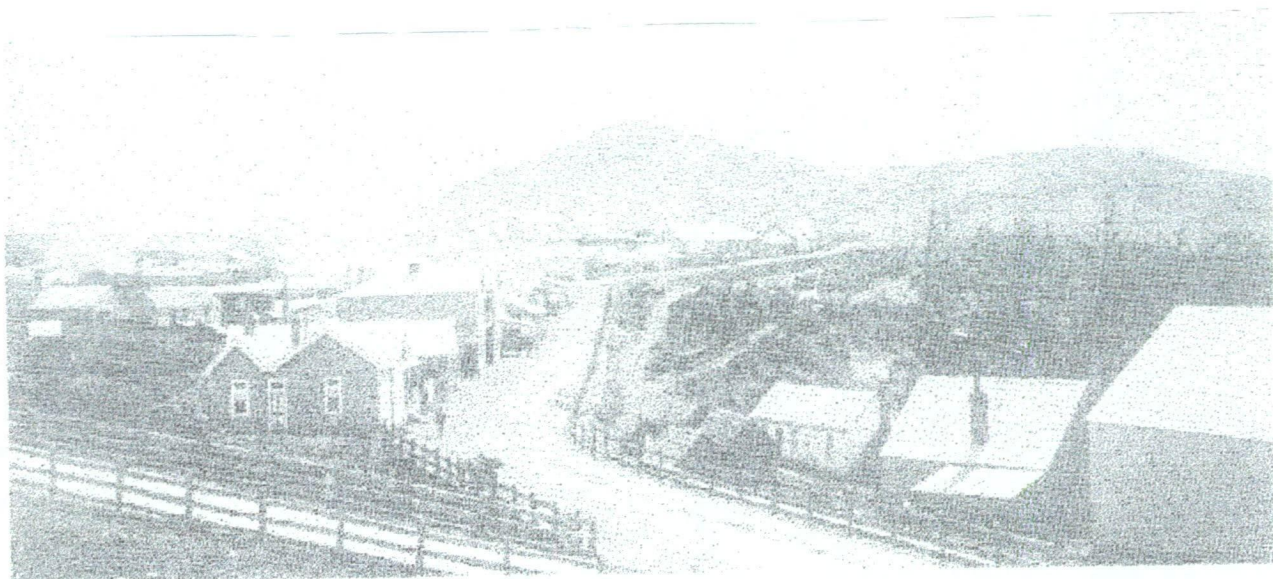
²⁵¹ W M Crosby to Smith 22 September 1876, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

²⁵² Smith to Henry Button 12 April 1876, no. 62, NS234/2/3 (AOT); Charles Hall to Smith 19 February 1881, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

²⁵³ Smith to William Ritchie 17 May 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²⁵⁴ Smith to William Ritchie 24 May 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

nominee, was elected a director in his own right to fill the vacancy. The prize had slipped from Smith's grasp.



(Top) Waratah at its peak, with Mount Bischoff behind. (Bottom) The White Face in about 1894. (Stephen Spurling II photo)

Part III: the Elder Statesman of Tasmanian Mining

Chapter 6: Gentleman Farmer and Civic Leader

Effects of the mining boom

'Westward ho!' was a cry that resounded in Tasmania as it had done in America, if with less vehemence. 'The discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff,' James Fenton wrote, '...marks a new era in the history of Tasmania.'¹ Mount Bischoff did not remove the tariffs or stop up the agricultural deluge that swamped the Tasmanian export trade: instead it opened up a new avenue of wealth. Contemporaneously Smith was credited with increasing property values,² turning the tide of immigration,³ reviving commerce,⁴ inspiring further mineral exploration,⁵ opening new tracts of country⁶ and benefiting all classes of the population.⁷

Some of these claims, at least, can be substantiated. The statistics for the first decade of Mount Bischoff production make interesting reading. Between 1874 and 1883 property values increased by 29.89 percent.⁸ In the same period Tasmania's 'tide of migration' improved from a deficit of 1,449 (in 1874) people to a surplus of 1,604 (in

¹ James Fenton, *History of Tasmania from its Discovery in 1642 to the Present Time*, J Walch and Sons, Hobart, 1884, p.386

² Address of the James Smith Testimonial Committee, read by Governor Weld, 'Discovery of Tin in Tasmania: Presentation to Mr James Smith', *Examiner*, 9 February 1878; *Tasmanian Mail*, 4 August 1877, p.13

³ *ibid*

⁴ *ibid*

⁵ Reverend Canon Hales, quoted in 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner*, 19 July 1877

⁶ *Tasmanian Mail*, 4 August 1877, p.13

⁷ Address of the James Smith Testimonial Committee

⁸ *Statistics of Tasmania 1883*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1883, p.XXXIX

1883).⁹ The population, which had dipped slightly in both 1874 and 1875, increased in every subsequent year.¹⁰ Exports rose from £925,325 in 1874 to £1,587,389 in 1882,¹¹ by which time, after only a few years of production, mining challenged agriculture as Tasmania's most important industry. Wages increased.¹² The figures above suggest that living standards in Tasmania improved during this decade, although whether they represent a benefit to all classes of the population is much harder to determine.

To what extent the foregoing improvements are attributable to Smith and Mount Bischoff is not easy to assess either. The advent of the Mount Bischoff mine coincided with the end of Tasmania's 15-year depression. The change came in 1872, when trade figures improved, prices and wages began to rise and revenue increased.¹³ 'The general state of affairs in the colony shows a decided improvement on that of 12 months since,' William Ritchie wrote in August 1873,

Sheep owners are as a class in independent circumstances and many of them are accumulating great wealth. The farmers too have done remarkably well this past season. The crops were the best we had known for about 8 years and prices for produce unusually good. There is a super abundance of money and real property is in great demand. Commerical transactions have now soundness which they had lacked for many years. Bankruptcies are extremely rare and none of any magnitude have occurred for a long time.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Mount Bischoff had a huge impact upon Tasmanian commerce. The sharp increases in Mount Bischoff Company production under Ferd Kayser's management coupled with the opening up of the north-eastern tin deposits are reflected in Tasmania's export figures. (By 1876 New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania

⁹ These figures are arrived at by subtracting the number of people leaving the colony from the number arriving for those particular years.

¹⁰ *Statistics of Tasmania 1882*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1882, p.VIII

¹¹ *Statistics of Tasmania 1875*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1875, p.63; *Statistics of Tasmania 1892*, Parliamentary Paper 13/1892, p.215

¹² See *Statistics of Tasmania* for relevant years.

¹³ W A Townsley, 'Tasmania and the Great Economic Depression, 1858-1872', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 4, no. 2, July 1955, p.46

¹⁴ William Ritchie to H Bland 11 August 1873, VDL24 (AOT)

together outstripped the famous Devon and Cornish tin mines, the Australian colonies then being the world's greatest tin producer.¹⁵) Of the £286,000-increase in Tasmanian exports in 1877, tin represented an extra £197,000 and wool, the only commodity that then exceeded it in value, added £83,000.¹⁶ By the time Mount Bischoff production peaked in 1881, tin constituted one-quarter of the colony's total export value, and when combined with gold exports that figure increased to more than one-third.¹⁷

Smith deserves much of the credit for these mineral production figures. Prospecting for tin was virtually unheard of in Tasmania before the discovery at Mount Bischoff. Afterwards, this mineral was sought and found by George Renison Bell and others in the north-east, by Charles Sprent at Mount Heemskirk and eventually, at Bell's instigation again, in massive quantity in the location later named after him. (The mineral lode discovered by Bell was initially worked for silver-lead: Renison Bell became known as a tin field after the discovery of the 'Gormanston nuggets' by Tom Strong and R Bennett in 1893.)¹⁸ In 1873 Bell visited Mount Bischoff in order to prepare him for tin-seeking in the north-east; Smith showed him the geological conditions in which tin was found at the Hampshire Hills, conditions which he believed were more likely to be replicated in Bell's target area.¹⁹ It was similarities to the Mount Bischoff country, however, which attracted Bell to the site of his initial discovery.²⁰

Mount Bischoff awakened the mining industry to the value of minerals other than gold and to the potential rewards for effort. The west coast, tested by Charles Gould and a few others, was now rigorously prospected. There were other benefits. Lloyd Robson points out Mount Bischoff's value as a training ground, not just for novice miners like the McDonough brothers and Con Lynch, but for entrepreneurs in other fields such as the canned vegetable king R G Edgell, and F M Alexander, developer of the Alexander

¹⁵ William Byrkmire, *Tin: its Chemistry and Commercial Value*, Samuel Mullen, Melbourne, 1877, p.12

¹⁶ *Statistics of Tasmania 1894*, Parliamentary Paper 71/1894, pp.10-1; 'Statistical Summary of Tasmania', *Statistics of Tasmania 1881*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1881, p.XI

¹⁷ *Statistics of Tasmania 1881*, *ibid*

¹⁸ See Kerry Pink and Patsy Crawford, *Renison: the Slumbering Giant*, Renison Ltd, Zeehan, 1996, p.20.

¹⁹ Smith to James Fenton 26 May 1882, no. 220, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

²⁰ See George Renison Bell's pamphlet, 'The Pioneer of Tin Discoveries on the North-East Coast of Tasmania: a Brief Statement of Facts', AD948/5/60 (AOT)

Technique of muscle relaxation. Hyman Herman, whom Robson calls a 'brilliant' geologist, worked his way toward pre-eminence in the service of the Mount Bischoff Company.²¹

Smith was partly responsible for the development of Tasmania's most successful gold mine, the Tasmania, at Beaconsfield. While the discovery of Mount Bischoff did not lead directly to the Dallys' 1877 strike, its success created a climate amenable to the Tasmania reef's exploitation. By 1878 Launceston businessmen and the general public rode high on their first Mount Bischoff dividends. Beaconsfield was enticingly close to home and shipping, and - what is more - this was gold, the long-awaited 'Eldorado'. One of the mine's buyers was William Hart, of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company. Mount Bischoff gave Beaconsfield the 'green light' to produce dividends of £773,000.

The mining boom brought Tasmania a new prosperity. The 1880s were the 'good times'. Beef and dairy farmers, potato and oats growers benefited from the new markets of the western and north-eastern mining fields.²² Potato growers and other primary producers prospered with the growth of the Australian urban and industrial food markets.²³ New business and employment opportunities opened up in mining towns. Consumer spending rose. Borrowed capital paid for railways and fed the speculation on mineral prospecting,²⁴ Lieutenant-General Sir J H Lefroy informing the Colonial Office,

I am happy to report a condition of general prosperity in the Colony...Not an inconsiderable amount of Capital flows in from England and Victoria and New South Wales for mining investment....²⁵

Nowhere was this new wealth more evident than in the 'northern capital', a city happily situated to benefit from mining in the west and north-east.²⁶ Not only was Launceston closer to the 'action' than Hobart was, but its earlier introduction to railways (beginning with the Launceston and Western Railway in 1871) ensured that it built on

²¹ Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania: Volume II: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, p.94

²² H J W Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910: the Establishment of an Agricultural Community*, Ph D thesis, Australian National University, 1969, pp.83 and 107

²³ *ibid*, p.79

²⁴ Peter Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973, p.144

²⁵ cited by Peter Bolger, *ibid*

that advantage. According to Townsley, in 1882 157 mining companies were registered in Launceston - a ten-fold increase since 1876 - compared to only 33 in Hobart.²⁷ The population of Launceston rose by 4,456 (by 35 percent) in the decade between the 1881 and 1891 censuses, compared to 3,787 for Hobart (18 percent). The building of the Albert Hall, said to rank among the twelve largest halls in the world, was, according to Geoffrey Blainey, an expression of the civic optimism of the period.²⁸ Office buildings displaced much of the city's Georgian architecture.²⁹ The monthly Mount Bischoff Company dividends became an institution in Launceston. According to John Reynolds, for many years Bischoff dividend day was looked forward to not only by shareholders, but by bank managers, estate agents, business houses and shopkeepers alike.³⁰ One of the company's directors, William Hart, was said to have made £800 per week from dividends, Dr J W Agnew £4,200 per year and even the Lord Bishop of Tasmania £1,200.³¹ Mount Bischoff and Beaconsfield together paid more than £3,000,000 in dividends. In 1886 Launceston handled more than half the colony's imports and exports and collected more than half its customs duties.³² The business generated in Launceston by the Mount Bischoff Company alone - in supplies and equipment for the mine and the Launceston smelters, employment, tariffs, port duties - can hardly be estimated.

Mount Bischoff opened new tracts of country. Mining spurred improved transport in remote areas. The main agent of this development was the railway. Rails were laid from Launceston to St Marys and Scottsdale as the north-eastern tin and gold fields opened up; limitless imagined Bischoffs amid the north-western wilderness strengthened

²⁶ Smith to John Smith 10 December 1877, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

²⁷ W A Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood: 1803-1945*, St David's Park, Hobart, 1991, p.207

²⁸ Geoffrey Blainey, 'Population Movements in Tasmania 1870-1901', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 3, no.4, June 1954, p.66

²⁹ Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, p.207

³⁰ John Reynolds, *Launceston: History of an Australian City*, Macmillan, Melbourne, 1969, p.119

³¹ Robson, *A History of Tasmania*, p.90

³² Llewellyn Slingsby Bethell, *The Story of Port Dalrymple: Life and Work in Northern Tasmania*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1980, p.139

calls to extend the Western Line beyond Deloraine along that coast, finally reaching the Emu Bay Railway terminus at Burnie.

Smith's tin stimulated rapid development in the north-west in the 1870s and 1880s. By 1881 the Waratah mining district was more populous than Burnie or Latrobe, making it effectively the largest centre in the north-west. Across the north a new era dawned. Symbolic of the usurpation of agriculture by minerals, in Launceston the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company smelters replaced an old steam-driven flour mill; the old power in the north-west bowed to the same new force. While 'Government House', as the Van Diemen's Land Company's residence built for its former agent James Gibson was known, settled among the thistles, around it Burnie sprouted churches, hotels, stores, a police station and courthouse.³³ As a result of Mount Bischoff trade, the port began to shake off its rivals, Table Cape and Stanley, the Van Diemen's Land Company's old headquarters.³⁴ A hotel arose at Hampshire, site of the decrepit Van Diemen's Land Company station, as the half-way house on the tramway (later a railway) between Waratah and Burnie.³⁵

East Devon shot to prominence in the 1880s, even as the north-west began to lose labourers, shopkeepers and professional men to the west coast mining towns.³⁶ The coming of the railway moulded Formby and Torquay into the important deepwater terminus of Devonport, eclipsing the old power of Latrobe and the other nearby port of Don. The gradual replacement of trading ketches and schooners by big steamers made for quicker, cheaper trade and condemned the smaller ports like Don and Forth which could not accommodate them.³⁷ By 1891 Devonport (1,805 people) was the largest north-western centre and the fourth largest on the island. With improved access to markets and new markets in the west, the coast was on its way to becoming Tasmania's major agricultural district.³⁸

³³ 'A Visit to the Mount Bischoff Tin Mines', *Cornwall Chronicle* 27 August 1873

³⁴ Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, p.209

³⁵ See, for example, 'Two Young Ladies', 'A Trip to Mount Bischoff', *Examiner* 3 February 1877; Our Special Reporter, 'The West Coast Goldfields: III', *Tasmanian Mail* 3 April 1880, p.8.

³⁶ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.103

³⁷ *ibid*, p.89

³⁸ Blainey, 'Population movements', p.16

In 1892 an optimistic Edward Braddon nominated Mount Bischoff as a mere pointer to the far greater riches promised by the Zeehan-Dundas silver field. Mount Bischoff, he wrote, had kept Waratah, Emu Bay and the conduit between them prosperous: 'This is but one mine. In the Mount Zeehan and Mount Dundas silver-fields there are some 160 mines!'³⁹ Never mind that those 160 altogether would scarcely shade Mount Bischoff. The 'ball' was 'rolling'. The Mount Lyell boom was just around the corner.

Home and family

As Mount Bischoff opened the Tasmanian mining industry, it closed James Smith's regular prospecting career. Although he would make a few more minor finds, his main influence upon mining now would be as a financier, guide and mentor: as the 'elder statesman' of Tasmanian mining.

Smith had not 'done his dash' for Tasmania, although some of the old fire, surely, had been extinguished in the boardroom of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company. It was failing health, business, farm management and, above all, his role as husband and father which precluded the arduous bush expeditions of previous years. 'If [I] were only twenty years younger,' Smith told Reverend William Law in 1877, '...[I] would like to be out on the bush again.'⁴⁰ Ironically, in another 20 years he *would* be out in the bush!

Mary Jane Love, whom Smith married in September 1874, warned him to get his going away done before the wedding - unless he was prepared to have her tag along.⁴¹ It is easy to imagine that the torment of awaiting his return from weeks alone in the bush was all too familiar to the sea captain's widow. Mary's first marriage had ended on Bass Strait in 1869, with the disappearance of the trading schooner *Sarah Barr*, of which her husband was the master. The ship's wreckage was never positively identified.

³⁹ Edward Braddon, 'Tasmania and its Silver-fields', *Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine*, October 1892, p. 501

⁴⁰ 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877

While Bass Strait estranged this couple, James Smith was still trying to turn back its tide which threatened his Penguin silver shaft. King Canute he was not, despite the stories which circulated of his equal feats defying the landscape. Called upon in his capacity of local mining guru at a dinner, Smith listed the types of rock encountered in opening up the north-western minerals. A flippant young lady took him to task for forgetting one.

'I think not', the Philosopher replied.

'Yes', she insisted, striking a blow for the ladies, who knew which hand ruled the world, 'rock the cradle.'⁴²

David Jones, who told this story, claimed that Smith determined to be avenged upon her sex, and the subject of that revenge appears to have been his friends the Walkers' storekeeper.

In the store Smith brandished a tin of pepper and remarked, 'Miss, your pepper is half peas.'

'Indeed it is not', Mary Jane Love sniffed.

'I can prove it', said Smith, pointing to each letter on the tin in turn and spelling out p-e-p-p-e-r. 'Isn't that half peas?'⁴³

The seduction apparently worked. By 1873 the pair had taken the first step to rocking the cradle by becoming engaged. The childless widow 14 years his junior came to see her maidenhood (as Mary Jane Pleas) and her married identity (Mary Jane Love) as the building-blocks of her life's unfinished command: Pleas Love Smith.⁴⁴

Given the smallness of the Forth community, Mary's job and Smith's friendship with the Walkers, it is hardly surprising that Mary and James were well acquainted. (The records show that in 1869 Smith bought butter and eggs from Mary, and that in 1870

⁴¹ Mary Jane Love to Smith, 4 May 1873, no. 149, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁴² William Ross Wallace's line 'The hand that rocks the cradle/Is the hand that rules the world', is cited by Michael Shortland, 'Bonneted Mechanic and Narrative Hero: the Self-Modelling of Hugh Miller', in (ed. Michael Shortland), *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, p.46.

⁴³ These stories were attributed to the surveyor David Jones in 'Waratah', *Daily Telegraph* 21 December 1903, p.6.

⁴⁴ This story has been passed down through the Smith family: personal communication with Shirley Stevenson.

she bought 82 shares in the Penguin Silver Mines Company.⁴⁵) The timing of this romance may have been coincidental, but it is likely that Smith sought a wife when, for the first time, he could afford to keep one.

Mary was Smith's confidant and *aide de camp* while he opened up Mount Bischoff ahead of selling it to the Mount Bischoff Company. (She found a man of such simple tastes hard to treat. Mary despatched her home-made jam and raspberry vinegar to the Mount, but when Minister of Lands Charles Meredith asked if he could take Smith spirits or cigarettes as a treat the only substitute she could imagine was chocolate drops.⁴⁶) She made the first ore bags used at Mount Bischoff, marshalled parties for the Mount and managed his affairs in his absence, a devotion that spilled out in her letters.⁴⁷

After prospecting at the Hampshire Hills in December 1873, Smith wound up so ill at Mrs Church's boarding house in Patterson Street, Launceston that the landlady wanted to send Mary to nurse him. Smith confessed that he needed to give exploring a rest,⁴⁸ with which his fiancée heartily concurred.⁴⁹ When Smith recovered, he chose a ruby engagement ring, which he could not wait to place on Mary's finger.⁵⁰ 'How nice it would be,' he wrote, 'if I had a house at the Clayton [Rivulet] and you to nurse me.'⁵¹

All he had, though, was a hut. Marriage to Mary signalled the end of Smith's spartan existence of two decades. He would never live at the original Westwood property again, let alone in the two-room 'bachelor's cot'. The first child, Leslie, was born during the couple's extended stay in Launceston (at Miss Button's residence in St John Street) in 1875, after which they took up residence in the old Pleas house, a part of which is believed to remain today as a hairdressing salon near the Forth bridge. It was here that 'James Smith of Westwood' (he retained the property name to distinguish him from the other James Smith at Forth) retired from Mount Bischoff in 1876, to his farm, his library, his laboratory and the consoling arms of wife and child.

⁴⁵ Smith accounts, NS234/26/11 and NS234/4/1 (AOT)

⁴⁶ Mary Jane Love to Smith 10 March 1873, no. 123, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ Smith to Mary Jane Love 17 January 1874, no. 189, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

⁴⁹ Mary Jane Love to Smith 22 January 1874, no. 20, NS234/3/3 (AOT)

⁵⁰ Smith to Mary Jane Love 21 January 1874, no. 187, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

⁵¹ Smith to Mary Jane Love 23 January 1874, no. 191, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

Mary appears to have been an intelligent, passionate woman who took a strong interest in her husband's affairs and was a devoted mother. Smith's marriage delighted his old chum Thomas Hainsworth, who had chided him about 'man's natural state' early in their friendship. 'You have found the domestic comfort at last,' Hainsworth wrote,

which you have so long and well deserved. You have obtained a wife and I believe a 'help meet', gains which a man does not always secure when he leads his wife to the altar. May God bless you both and give you that domestic joy and peace which you so richly deserve.⁵²

Mary and James rocked the cradle six times. Smith awaited fatherhood eagerly:

It is delightful to know that there will be a little one for us both to love as parents only can. I shall be glad to get back to you. I never felt so fond of you as now.⁵³

He was so anxious about the infant Leslie's health that during a trip from Launceston (where the family was then living) back to Forth in 1875 he wrote to his wife from Deloraine asking her to telegraph Leslie's condition to him and to 'Kiss the darling for me.'⁵⁴ 'Kiss dear Leslie for me' appended nearly all of Smith's letters to Mary from the bush in the following year.

The Philosopher's influence upon his children is very evident: they inherited his love of the bush and of nature, while both parents 'inculcated' their brood with their love of literature.⁵⁵ Smith's prospecting 'gene' was hardly recessive; all three boys and several grandchildren took an interest in mining. Ronald's daughter Edith trained as a geologist, while Garnet's sons Geoffrey and Donald worked in gold mining.⁵⁶

After being schooled in prospecting by the Philosopher, Leslie mounted an expedition through the Cradle Mountain area to the west coast in 1899⁵⁷ and oversaw his late father's mining properties. Although he passed many years in sight of Mount

⁵² Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 11 November 1874, no. 344, NS234/3/4 (AOT)

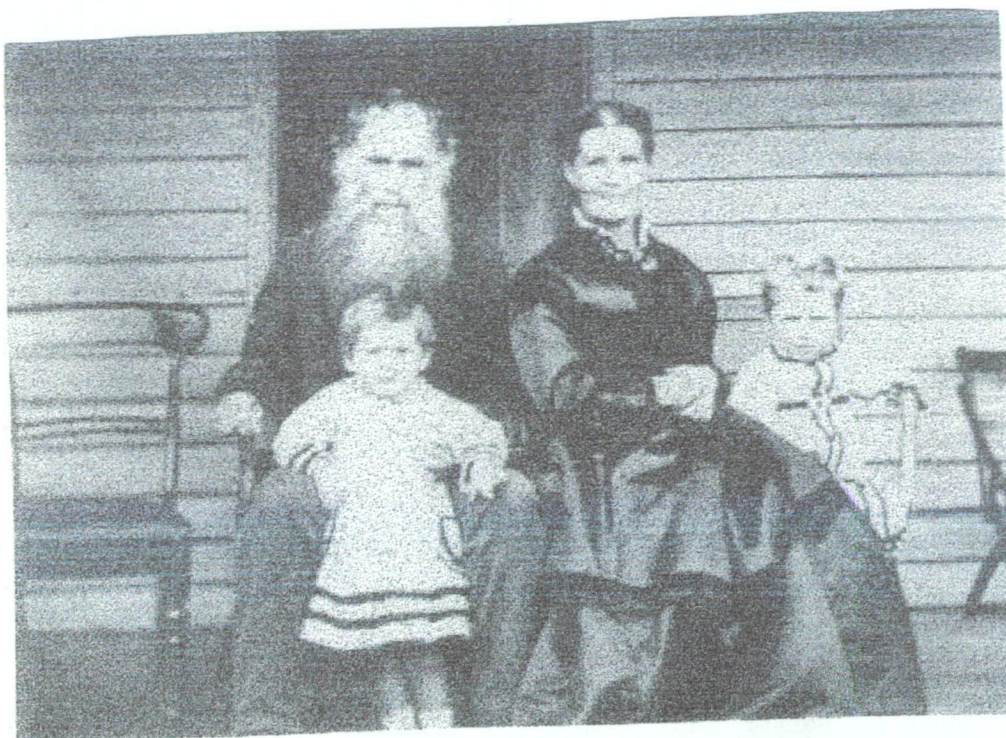
⁵³ Smith to Mary Jane Smith 16 June 1875, no. 261, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

⁵⁴ Smith to Mary Jane Smith 29 September 1875, no. 269, NS234/5/1 (AOT)

⁵⁵ A B Crowther, *James Smith*, A3160 (Mitchell Library) p.14

⁵⁶ 'Smith Family Still Into Mining', *Advocate* 26 November 1984

⁵⁷ F J Prichard, 'Westward Ho!: Mole Creek to Rosebery: The Through Route', *Examiner* 23 February 1899, p.7



(Top) James 'Philosopher' Smith, wife Mary and children Leslie John and Annie Bertha, 1877 or 1878. (Charles Smith)

(Bottom) Smith's eldest daughter, the writer Annie Bertha Crowther. (Shirley Stevenson)

Bischoff, where his exploits apparently gained him the nickname 'Wild Cat',⁵⁸ he never emulated his father's success.

Ronald followed his father's devotion to a mountain - not Mount Bischoff, but the far more picturesque Cradle Mountain, which the Philosopher had tested in 1859. Having taken an invalid pension after the Great War, 'Major' Smith worked tirelessly with Cradle Valley tourism operator Gustav Weindorfer and others to establish the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park.⁵⁹ The striking similarities between the Philosopher and the Major extended far beyond this, a physical resemblance and custodianship of Westwood, however. Ronald inherited his father's sense of public duty, his meticulousness, his curiosity and his passion for study and self-improvement. He recalled how, as a ten-year-old, he was taught to 'square the circle' and to calculate the value of the symbol 'Pi' to ten decimal places by his father:

I was amazed and just stood staring at him. He laughed and stroked his white beard and said 'The Greek for white beard is *leukos pogon*.'⁶⁰

By then, Ronald had already been keeping his own records for three years; he would sort, file, index and cross-reference more than 50,000 documents relating to family and 'business' in his lifetime.⁶¹ Just as James Smith pursued his passion in the back country to within a few days of his death, so his son puttered his old Chevrolet up to Cradle Mountain more than 60 years after his first visit. Ronald was instrumental in the production of George Bergman's 1959 biography *Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain*. The book was based on his notes, featured his photos and a foreword he had written, and owed its publication to his tenacity.⁶²

Youngest child Garnet (born in 1884) inherited his father's interest in the press and prospecting. In 1923 he published his father's notes about the successful expedition

⁵⁸ Harry Reginald Paine, *Taking You Back Down the Track...Is About Waratah in the Early Days*, Somerset, Tasmania, 1994, p.105

⁵⁹ Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, pp.96, 126, 130, 137-139, 164-178. See also G F Bergman, *Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain*, Hobart, 1959.

⁶⁰ 'Like Father, Like Son', *Devon News* 24 October 1963. Ronald Smith must have forgotten this incident when, in 'Early Life of James Smith', p.5, he wrote that he had never seen his father laugh.

⁶¹ 'Like Father, Like Son', *Devon News* 24 October 1963

⁶² See Haygarth, *A View to Cradle*, p.186.

to Mount Bischoff in order to refute a ridiculous allegation that Smith had defrauded another prospector of this find.⁶³ In his poem 'Tassie Miners Past and Present',⁶⁴ written in the 1920s, Garnet recalled life on the Zeehan silver field, presumably when it was at its peak, in the years after his father's death. Here he met some of Tasmania's most notable prospectors, including Frank Long (discoverer of the Zeehan field),⁶⁵ Jimmy Elliott (a pioneer of the Lynchs Creek gold rush),⁶⁶ Jim (presumably he means Bill or Mick) McDonough (co-discoverer of the Mount Lyell Iron Blow)⁶⁷ and 'Jim' McGinty (who captured Tasmania's largest ever gold nugget - weighing about seven kilograms - at the Rocky River).⁶⁸ Ironically, each of these old-timers' claims to fame had preceded Garnet's birth. This poem makes an interesting comparison to his father's verse, which was occasionally a vehicle for irony but never for reminiscence or nostalgia, as much as the Philosopher appears to have enjoyed reliving the camaraderie of the Victorian gold rushes. The 'British lion' had been dear to Smith. It is noteworthy that, even three decades after his father was compared to Livingstone, Stanley and the Light Brigade, Garnet Smith describes the venerable mining men as 'on an equal with the empire's very best', as he mixes mateship with the stoic Briton:

Honest Britons fearless, game and bold,

Men who'd scorn to leave a fallen cobber's side.⁶⁹

The Anzac diggers, after all, were British, a word which described 'white men of the Empire wherever they were', England and Australia being just 'different members of the same family'.⁷⁰

Two of Smith's daughters, Eva (born in 1878) and Gertrude (born in 1880), followed the expected path for their gender by marrying and rearing a large family, in

⁶³ Garnet Smith, 'The Story of Bischoff', *Advocate* 26 April 1923; and 'The True Story of Mount Bischoff: Told from the Discoverer's Notes', *Advocate* 1 May 1923, p.6. The story refuted was 'The Story of Bischoff: the World's Greatest Tin Mine: How it Was Discovered', *Advocate* 24 April 1923, p.4.

⁶⁴ audio tape held by Shirley Stevenson

⁶⁵ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, Melbourne University Press, 1954, p.50

⁶⁶ C J Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1988, p.112

⁶⁷ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p.24

⁶⁸ Binks, *Pioneers*, p.30

⁶⁹ audio tape held by Shirley Stevenson

New South Wales and Victoria respectively. The eldest, Annie Bertha (born in 1877), originally followed suit. After her husband was killed in action at Gallipoli, however, leaving her with an adolescent daughter and a widow's pension, she was able to pursue her love of writing.⁷¹ As A B Crowther and under pseudonyms she wrote poetry, short stories, plays and (unpublished) novels. Annie's childhood and family are firmly imprinted upon her written works. A collection of short stories titled *Under the Southern Cross* recalls the 'memory of happy days we spent together at dear old 'Westdale'.⁷² The novel *Templeton Court* is dedicated to her parents.⁷³ The character of James Smith recurs in his daughter's works. Uncle Paul in *John Lane*, a bushman all his life, returns home late in the evening from a trip to Cradle Mountain, bringing his children a baby brush possum as a pet.⁷⁴ Colonel Roper in *Merely Players* also borrows from the Philosopher.⁷⁵ A loner and abstainer, he prefers his study, his library, garden and the bush to socialising. Trips to Cradle Mountain and Black Bluff are frequently suggested by the youngsters at Westdale, recalling Smith's prospecting trips with Leslie.

Judging by her writing, Annie's childhood was secure and happy. She recounted evenings in which the children gathered before a huge fire at Westwood, beguiled by their parents' and visitors' stories.⁷⁶ Sometimes her mother would read poetry (Mary's grandchildren would recall her reciting Lord Macaulay's *The Lays of Ancient Rome* and *The Battle of Lake Regillus*, and the story of how Horatio kept the bridge⁷⁷) or prose aloud, in which Smith also delighted. Yet, for all the glowing memories, Annie left clues about a troubled relationship with her father. The first intimation of it comes in George

⁷⁰ Bill Gammage, 'Anzac', in (ed. John Carroll), *Intruders in the Bush: the Australian Quest for Identity*, 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 (originally published 1982), p.58

⁷¹ personal communication with Shirley Stevenson

⁷² A B Crowther, *Under the Southern Cross*, A3158 (Mitchell Library), title page

⁷³ A B Crowther, *Templeton Court*, A3148 (Mitchell Library), title page

⁷⁴ A B Crowther, *John Lane*, A3156 (Mitchell Library)

⁷⁵ A B Crowther, *Merely Players*, A3157 (Mitchell Library), p.5

⁷⁶ Crowther, *James Smith*, p.13. By 'Westwood' Crowther means the whole Smith property at the Forth rather than the original block on Claytons Rivulet. The house she refers to is the one by the bridge, not the house on the Westwood farm. When Smith speaks of 'Westwood' in his diaries he means the Westwood farm where his original hut stood. Smith never lived in the house that was built at Westwood.

⁷⁷ according to Shirley Stevenson, personal communication

Scott's *The Lone Hand* article in 1907, the detailed nature of which gives away the author's true identity:

This search [Smith's search for minerals] lasted many years - years beset by dangers, privations and intense loneliness, which left a mark on his character in the extreme shyness and reserve which he showed, not only to strangers but even to the members of his own family...⁷⁸

Unknown to that writer, the stigma of Smith's ex-convict parentage probably contributed to his 'extreme shyness and reserve'. Ronald Smith effectively commended the Scott article by acknowledging it as a source for his *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry about his father, and it contains facts - mineralogy and geology being the pet subjects of Smith's self-education, Melmoth Fletcher accompanying Smith to the Victorian goldfields, Smith's survival in the bush on sugar and water - which recur only in Annie Bertha's *James Smith*, making it certain that George Scott was one of her pseudonyms. Given that link, Scott's comment above sheds light on the unnamed subject of the widowed Crowther's contemplation in 1922:

The man I loved most was an utter mystery to me. Sometimes for weeks together I flattered myself that at last I knew him right down to the innermost recesses of his brain, and the depths of his dear, big, generous heart; only to discover that he and I were strangers in the most awful and numbing sense of the word.⁷⁹

That 'the man I loved most' was her late father, rather than her late husband, is supported by the paragraph which follows the one above. It seems to acknowledge shared experience within the confines of a marriage:

Another man I cared for when I was younger confessed to having the same experience where I was concerned; but declared that not knowing me made life much more interesting than it would have been otherwise.

⁷⁸ George Scott (A B Crowther, nee Smith), 'The Discoverer of Mount Bischoff', *The Lone Hand* 2 December 1907, p.201

⁷⁹ Thanks to Shirley Stevenson for her thoughts on this matter. Annabelle Lovel (A B Crowther, nee Smith), 'His Royal Highness - Man', *The N Z L Quarterly Magazine* September 1922, pp.125-6

Whereas I would have given the universe, had it been mine, to have known him, and that other one, as I knew myself.

Significantly, Annie confided the information about her father only under a pseudonym, Annabelle Lovel, patched together, apparently, from her name (Annie Bertha) and her mother's first married name, Love, probably to hide her feelings from her family and to spare them any embarrassment.⁸⁰ Perhaps Annie's resurrection of her father in various guises in her stories was her attempt to come to terms with a man she felt she never knew in real life.

In the light of this, it is pertinent to wonder why Annie's brother Ronald collaborated on a Weindorfer biography, but did not profile in detail the other substantial figure with whom his life had been closely entwined and whose papers were at his fingertips, his father - or that he did not feed the story to one of his contacts, the writer Patsy Adam Smith, a bowerbird of Tasmaniana who somehow missed out on 'Philosopher' Smith. And why did Garnet write verse about the great prospectors he had known, but not about the greatest? Perhaps their father stood too close to them to answer to his reputation; then again, perhaps he was too distant.

By the mid 1880s Smith's predominance at the Forth was such that newcomers must have imagined he was landed gentry. His correspondence with his many tenants and agents suggests almost a beneficent feudal lord. Yet it was only a few years since the visiting Anthony Trollope had been told that no emancipist had ever been admitted into polite society, and that Braddon had noted 'Young Tasmania cannot forgive those of a former generation who bear the convict brand, cannot believe any sort of good of them...'⁸¹ The 'stain' was alive and well - *well hidden*, that is.

⁸⁰ Annie sometimes wrote under the name 'A B C' (Annie Bertha Crowther), which was also a pseudonym her father sometimes used in 'letters to the editor' columns. Other pseudonyms she used included Ann Grant (her grandmother's maiden name), Mary Westwood (combining her mother's name with the property name), William Williamson, Francis West and George Scott.

⁸¹ Anthony Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand* (eds. P D Edwards and R B Joyce), University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1967 (originally published 1873), vol. II, p.21; and Edward Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies: Letters to India from North-West Tasmania* (ed. Scott Bennett), Tasmanian Historical Research Centre, Hobart, 1980, letter XXVII, October 1878 - both cited in Henry Reynolds, 'That Hated Stain': the Aftermath of Transportation in Tasmania', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 14, no. 53, October 1969, p.26

Smith was the largest landholder in the Forth district, occupying 1,400 acres (at his death he owned 23 dwellings, mostly rental properties at Forth, Ulverstone, Waratah and Burnie.) To Westwood he had added James Fenton's old property, Norwood, the Walkers' farm Berlavendu and other adjoining properties, including the 'Marsh' farm. Each of these farms had its own homestead and outbuildings. He had land admirably suited to fruit-growing, dairying and fattening, cereals and root crops, stud sheep and cattle breeding.⁸² Smith's luxuriant orchard, producer of (tin aside) perhaps his best-known largesse, cases of apples, nestled in a loop in the rivulet. Above it, the sheltered hill paddocks with their rich chocolate soil awaited winter pasture; in summer the moist, loamy flats provided the feed and shelter; the salt marshes by the river were well-suited to fattening sheep. Smith's flocks of Merino (chiefly bred from William Gibson's Scone ewes and stud rams⁸³), Leicester and Lincoln sheep,⁸⁴ and a herd of Hereford cattle, drawn from the best sires in Tasmania, grazed a carpet of velvety grass and sometimes blitzed the opposition at local agricultural shows.⁸⁵

There was always work to do. In summer the hay was prepared, the young lambs were weaned and ewes selected for breeding. Grazing by sheep and cattle were alternated. In autumn the attention turned to picking, packing and despatching the apples. In winter William Bye classified the rams in preparation for Smith's annual trip to the Melbourne sale, from which he might return with another of Scone's famous rams. The potatoes were dug, packed and despatched. In spring the fruit trees were pruned and new apple and pear scions grafted onto the old stocks in the orchard. This was also lambing season. The Angora goats and sheep were sheared. Grass, rape seed, corn, peas and oats were sown, potato ground was ploughed prior to planting. These tasks plus slaughtering, fencing, milking, branding, drainage, clearing new paddocks and general maintenance kept about a dozen men busy under Smith's watchful eye.

⁸² Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 30', *Mercury* 29 March 1884

⁸³ Smith to ? 16 April 1891, no. 160, NS234/2/16 (AOT)

⁸⁴ In 1884 Smith owned 591 sheep (W J MacKenzie to Smith 5 February 1884, no. 36A, NS234/3/13 [AOT]).

⁸⁵ See, for example, 'Devon Agricultural Society', *Examiner* 27 April 1882; and 'Devon Agricultural Society', *Cornwall Chronicle* 1 May 1876.

He was a hard taskmaster. Several farm managers were sacked for laziness, and his diaries often refer to reprimanding his workers: 'Spoke to McCarty reprimanding [sic] him for not working better.'⁸⁶ There is a sign that the red-hot temper of his adolescence, which he appears to have curbed later, still occasionally got the better of him.⁸⁷ Smith was a stickler for doing things the right way; but if he could be starchy, the Smith legend scarcely exaggerates his generosity and charitability: his charity 'bump' must have been a prominent one. He rewarded friendship and support in years gone by, even down to the storekeeper whose repayment for credit given Smith on a pair of boots was a paid-up Mount Bischoff Company share: the Vagabond calculated that by 1894 this share would have paid £111 10 shillings in dividends.⁸⁸

I am gratified at the manner in which you appreciate the present of shares. I was indebted to your dear departed son for many kindnesses and his friendship was most needed by me...

Smith told the mother of James Grant in 1878.⁸⁹ In 1882 Smith helped out Edwin Cummings with a loan of £100 when his old grub-staker was struggling to make a living in Portland, Victoria.⁹⁰ George Anderson was able to finance his two youngest sons' education at Aberdeen University from shares given him by Smith.⁹¹ In Shanghai, China, Charles Gould was surprised to receive a dividend from shares he did not know he owned.⁹² Smith was also inconvenienced by loans he made.

Inevitably, some people took advantage of Smith's generosity. Although he gave rent defaulters, at least, short shrift (in 1884 he sent a debt collector after some of his Waratah tenants⁹³), for most of his adult life he was owed money, sometimes to his own inconvenience. The failure of several men to repay their debts in the late 1870s

⁸⁶ Smith diary entry 11 September 1883, NS234/1/6 (AOT)

⁸⁷ See Magnus Smith to Smith 4 April 1878, no. 124, NS234/3/7 (AOT).

⁸⁸ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', Age 27 October 1894, p.10

⁸⁹ Smith to Mrs Grant 13 May 1878, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

⁹⁰ Edwin Cummings to Smith 4 May 1882 and 26 May 1882, no. 120, NS234/3/11; and Smith to Edwin Cummings 15 May 1882, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

⁹¹ *Circular Head Chronicle* 8 April 1953, cited by Kerry Pink and Annette Ebdon, *Beyond the Ramparts: a Bicentennial History of Circular Head, Tasmania*, Circular Head Bicentennial History Group, Smithton, 1988, p.102. Smith later gave Anderson 100 contributing shares in the Mount Zeehan Silver-Lead Company.

⁹² Charles Gould to Smith, 28 September 1880, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

⁹³ Thomas Clarkson to Smith 23 April 1884, no. 117, NS234/3/13 (AOT)

forced their creditor to sell a large number of shares at a low value, cutting into his nest egg.⁹⁴ Among Smith's beneficiaries was an out-of-work journalist and jack-of-all-trades, Thomas Jones, who requested he and Robert Quiggin post a £200 bond which would enable Jones's daughter to take the job of Dundas postmistress. The sponsors regretted their decision when she embezzled £33.⁹⁵

The epitome of Smiles's 'true gentleman', Smith gave to worthy objects, churches, sporting clubs, mechanics' institutes and friendly societies, the poor and charities.⁹⁶ He granted land for the buildings of churches or manses at Forth, Waratah, Strahan, Zeehan, Burnie and Ulverstone.⁹⁷ He gave a £50 annuity to the Waratah Public School,⁹⁸ and sent wagon-loads of firewood to the local convent.⁹⁹ Hainsworth recalled how in giving £10 to the Chinese famine subscription Smith divided the sum into smaller lots and made it appear they had been forwarded from several districts, as an example to contributors from these areas.¹⁰⁰ It is certain that many gestures of kindness went unrecorded, as they were almost a daily event:

Elderly man who said his name was McCarty called and asked whether I could give him employment. I told him I could not and gave him half a crown for which he seemed grateful.¹⁰¹

Aside from his financial aid, the annual gift of cases of apples (some even travelling to New South Wales) helped sustain struggling ministers of religion and their families. Smith probably saw this as a duty.¹⁰²

⁹⁴ Smith to Thomas Henderson, for example, 10 June 1879, no. 232, NS234/2/5 (AOT)

⁹⁵ See Thomas P H Jones to Smith 7 May 1892, no. 127, NS234/3/20 (AOT); Bye to Smith 29 May 1893, no. 159, and Robert Quiggin to Smith 2 June 1893, no. 172, NS234/3/21.

⁹⁶ Henry John Cock to Smith 10 October 1882, no. 374; William Law to Smith 2 October 1882, no. 362, NS234/3/11; J E Lyle to Smith, 15 October 1888, no. 500, NS234/3/16; J Millar to Smith 7 March 1882, no. 75, NS234/3/11; ? to Smith 10 October 1881, no. 30, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

⁹⁷ for example, in 1889 he offered the Salvation Army land for building in Waratah (Salvation Army to Smith, 21 February 1889, no. 69, NS234/3/17 [AOT]); in 1892 he gave land for the Anglican church at Ulverstone (*Examiner* 14 December 1892); and in 1894 for the Salvation Army barracks in the same town (*Examiner* 3 August 1894, p.3)

⁹⁸ ? to Smith, 18 March 1878, no. 160, NS234/3/7(AOT)

⁹⁹ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith and the Discovery of Tin at Mount Bischoff', 1947, 6-701C, MLMSS3596 (Mitchell Library), p.6

¹⁰⁰ 'Fecit Suo More', 'James Smith', *Examiner* 22 October 1878

¹⁰¹ diary entry 19 September 1890, NS234/1/2/15 (AOT)

¹⁰² 'Christian Preachers', *Examiner* 8 October 1867

One regular Smith beneficiary was Thomas Hainsworth, who remained a valuable friend. Hainsworth's ideals and his quest for self-improvement had long since submerged in a litany of woes and heavy responsibilities. In 1865 his first born, Fred, had developed periostitis, the inflammation of the fibres of the bones.¹⁰³ Smith's financial aid enabled Hainsworth to send his son away to convalesce, but unfortunately Fred succumbed to lung disease two years later. In 1876 Hainsworth suffered an agonising fistula which he feared would kill him on the operating table.¹⁰⁴ He believed that if he was not cured he would have to give up teaching school, as it had cost him his memory and his 'cheerful and exuberant spirits',¹⁰⁵ and so threatening did the injury seem that he asked Smith to provide for his children in the event of his death. The Philosopher was among those who urged Hainsworth to go ahead with the surgery,¹⁰⁶ which proved such a success that both spirits and mobility were restored.¹⁰⁷ The schoolteacher's woes did not end there. Smith then bailed his old friend out of his worst financial mess to date, by helping him pay off his house at Latrobe and his land at Table Cape, rewarding the other's frequent public support.¹⁰⁸

Time and time again Smith was supplicated in cases of personal hardship. He was asked to find people work and to assist in their promotion. For example, Baron von Mueller asked him to help find Sir Joseph Hooker's son a job in Tasmania.¹⁰⁹ William Gibson requested he look out for one of his (Gibson's) ex-servants now resident at the Forth. Smith, in turn, asked Samuel Sutton to intervene to stop an old Forth couple being separated when one was threatened with despatch to the Hobart Charitable Institute.¹¹⁰ Tenants called upon him to act as moral arbiter: the Philosopher's wisdom was constantly taxed.

¹⁰³ Thomas Hainsworth, 'Periostitis', *Examiner* 10 September 1867

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 3 November 1876, no. 279, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

¹⁰⁵ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 15 November 1876, no. 289, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

¹⁰⁶ Smith to Thomas Hainsworth 10 November 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 11 January 1877, no. 8, NS234/3/6 (AOT)

¹⁰⁸ Smith to Thomas Hainsworth 11 January 1877, NS234/2/3; Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 11 January 1877, no. 8, NS234/3/6 (AOT)

¹⁰⁹ Smith to J W Agnew 16 July 1894, no. 212, NS234/2/18; Smith to Baron von Mueller 30 July 1894, no. 231, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

¹¹⁰ Smith to S J Sutton, 4 December 1891, no. 497, NS234/2/16 (AOT)

When he was not instructing his workmen on the farm, away attending mining or political meetings, inspecting mines at Mount Bischoff, on a short prospecting trip, or absent on other business, he would be in his study or his laboratory. Smith the physick was in similar demand to Smith the landlord and benefactor.¹¹¹ (Mary, another strong believer in homeopathy, seems to have taken over the role of local medical adviser after his death.¹¹²) He consulted doctors, including those in his library.¹¹³ The most unusual case was when insects were found to be breeding inside the head of his old prospecting chum Melmoth Fletcher's young daughter.¹¹⁴ He also recommended a native herb for Hainsworth's diabetes¹¹⁵ and was once forced to test his snakebite expertise on a human, supplementing Underwood's antidote with doses of liquid ammonia and brandy. Despite scarification of the bitten part, the patient recovered within 24 hours.¹¹⁶ W H Jenkin's *The Family Medicine Index* provided a cold remedy,¹¹⁷ Warren's *Household Physician* prescribed a treatment for gout;¹¹⁸ mustard seeds were mailed off to another acquaintance at the behest of Dr Graham's medical work,¹¹⁹ black currant jam - to be drunk - was delivered to an invalid.¹²⁰

Dr Dundas was Smith's official medical choice except when in 1884 he agreed to subscribe £5 per year for the services of Dr (later Sir) John McCall,¹²¹ who had set up practice in Ulverstone in the previous year after a bitter dispute with Ferd Kayser had

¹¹¹ for example, Smith to James Patterson 13 March 1894, NS234/2/18 (AOT) gives medical advice to Mrs Patterson

¹¹² See, for example, Redmond Cameron to Mary Jane Smith, 23 January 1912, no. 2746, NS234/5/7 (AOT); and F Styant Browne to Mary Jane Smith 5 June 1905, no. 1994, NS234/5/5 (AOT).

¹¹³ for example, Smith to E B E Walker 15 April 1879, NS234/2/5 (AOT), asks Walker to attend to a small child - and Smith's grey mare

¹¹⁴ Melmoth Fletcher to Smith 9 January 1882, no. 9, NS234/3/11; Smith to Melmoth Fletcher 6 January 1882 and 17 January 1882, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

¹¹⁵ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith 1 November 1890, no. 269, NS234/3/18; Smith to Thomas Hainsworth 23 June 1893, no. 452, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

¹¹⁶ 'Snake Bites', letter to *Examiner* 1881, NS234/2/7 (AOT)

¹¹⁷ scrap of letter, 1893, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

¹¹⁸ 1893, no. 657, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

¹¹⁹ Smith to his overseer Edward Smith 5 March 1894, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

¹²⁰ Smith to E B E Walker 4 December 1879, NS234/2/5 (AOT)

¹²¹ See Scott Bennett, 'Sir John McCall (1860-1919)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp.208-9.

driven him from Waratah.¹²² After Smith paid a visit to the Ulverstone dispensary in 1885, McCall accompanied him to the horse-drawn coach in which he (Smith) would make his return journey to Forth. The collective surprise can only be imagined as the coach door opened - and there sat 'the Kaiser' himself.¹²³ Perhaps only the barest pleasantries were exchanged during that uncomfortable ride between towns.

Rewarding the 'public benefactor'

Smith and Livingstone had climbed the pinnacles of their fame almost simultaneously. While Smith was tramping and clawing his way to Mount Bischoff in November 1871, Henry Stanley was beating a jungle path to the most famous meeting since David and Goliath. Stanley had been under the instructions of his *New York Herald* editor, James Gordon Bennett, to 'find' a man (Livingstone) who was not lost, and, in the name of newspaper sales, portray him as 'a saint, who had dedicated his life to a cause and was continuing - despite illness and advancing years - to carry out his self-imposed task.'¹²⁴

Stanley had done his boss's bidding. While Smith carried a three-kilo load into the bush, the American's bearers hauled the trappings of civilisation, including a bathtub, a silver tea service and Persian carpets, through an

illimitable forest stretching in grand waves far beyond the ken of vision -
ridges, forest-clad, rising gently one above another until they receded in
the dim purple-blue distance...¹²⁵

Smith, like other bushmen and even modern-day bushwalkers, would have recognised and perhaps enjoyed the isolation from human affairs a stint in the bush offered. Surprising political developments and even natural catastrophes would greet

¹²² See Nic Haygarth, 'King of the Waratah: Ferd Kayser and the Mount Bischoff Tin Mine', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 48, no. 3B, September 2001, p.218.

¹²³ Smith diary entry 26 November 1885, NS234/1/8 (AOT)

¹²⁴ Judith Listowel, *The Other Livingstone*, Julian Friedman, Lewes, United Kingdom, 1974, p.233

the lone explorer when he returned to 'civilisation'. Since Livingstone's final communication with the world outside the jungle, Britain's imperial supply line the Suez Canal had been opened, the Pacific Railroad had been completed, Ulysses S Grant had been elected American president, a Spanish revolution had taken place and Prussia, having defeated Denmark in battle, had advanced on Paris.¹²⁶ These events paled into insignificance, however, next to the sufferings of Livingstone. By the time the Mount Bischoff tin mine was up and running, his legend was in full bloom:

I have gone over battlefields, witnessed revolutions, civil wars, rebellions...and massacres...but never had I been called to record anything that moved me so much as this man's woes and suffering, his privations and disappointments....I defy any one to be in his society long without thoroughly fathoming him, for in him there is no guile...Livingstone's was a character I venerated, that called forth all my enthusiasm, that evoked nothing but sincerest admiration.... Spartan heroism, the inflexibility of the Roman, the enduring resolution of the Anglo-Saxon - never to relinquish his work, though his heart yearns for home; never to surrender his obligations until he can write FINIS to his work... by continued hardship and privation.

Livingstone's body had cried 'FINIS' in May 1873, while Smith was negotiating with the suitors of the Mount Bischoff tin ground in Melbourne. The former event had caused Stanley some suffering:

He was dead! He had died by the shores of Lake Bemba, on the threshold of the dark region he had wished to explore! The work he had promised me to perform was only begun when death overtook him!¹²⁷

This, apparently, left Stanley no option but to 'flash a torch of light across the western half of the Dark Continent' himself.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Henry M Stanley; cited in Sue Newson-Smith (ed.), *Quest: the Story of Stanley and Livingstone Told in Their Own Words*, Arlington Books, London, 1978, p.208

¹²⁶ Listowel, *The Other Livingstone*, p.334

¹²⁷ Henry M Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent or the Sources of the Nile Around the Great Lakes of Equatorial Africa and Down the Livingstone River to the Atlantic Ocean*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1879, vol. I, p.1

The contemporary comparisons made between Smith and Livingstone or Stanley now seem absurd, but the timing of Smith's success made them inevitable. Livingstone's fame peaked just as Tasmania's beacon, the Mount Bischoff tin mine, began to revitalise its economy. The annual value of the colony's tin exports had escalated from £220 in 1873 to £297,000 four years later.¹²⁹ Further tin fields were promised by discoveries in the north-east and at Mount Heemskirk in the west. Already tin easily outstripped gold: throughout the 1880s Mount Bischoff's output alone would exceed the annual value of Tasmania's gold production.¹³⁰

Yet at that time government financial incentives existed only for gold strikes. In 1863 parliament had finally promulgated a workable gold reward act.¹³¹ It guaranteed £1,000 for the discoverer of a field which produced 100 ounces of gold per week for a year, with provision for up to £5,000 to be granted at the discretion of the governor-in-council. It is indicative of the mining doldrums that the only other enticement to individual enterprise had been the *Act to Encourage Certain Manufactures in Tasmania* (1869), which offered bonuses for large-scale producers of beet sugar, salt, woollen products and sacking. Not until the *Mining Act* was passed in 1905 would a formal reward mechanism encourage discoveries generally, by which time Tasmanian mining had already peaked: as Blainey has pointed out, at the beginning of the twentieth-century Tasmania had Australia's largest tin field, largest copper field, second largest silver field, and Beaconsfield gold as well.¹³²

Given that a goldfield which produced 100 ounces per week for a year entitled the discoverer to a £5,000 reward (in fact no more than £1,000 was guaranteed), why was nothing offered to Smith, a far greater benefactor? So asked a *Cornwall Chronicle* reader, invoking a catchphrase that echoed across the colony: 'What has been done for

¹²⁸ Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, vol. I, p.127

¹²⁹ *Statistics of Tasmania 1878*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1878

¹³⁰ *Statistics of Tasmania 1894*, Parliamentary Paper 71/1894

¹³¹ *Goldfield Reward Act* (1863). In 1881 Samuel Richards handsomely split the difference, with a reward of £3,000 for discovering the Nine Mile Springs (Lefroy) goldfield. See Glyn Roberts, *The Role of Government in the Development of the Tasmanian Metal Mining Industry: 1803-1883*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 1999, pp.114-5.

¹³² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.207

him? Nothing!’¹³³ The homily would allude to a fortune wasted bringing Charles Gould and Edward Hargraves to Tasmania; to Hargraves’ £5,000 reward for his alleged gold discovery in New South Wales; and to Smith’s far greater enterprise and sacrifice.¹³⁴

Thomas Monds issued the challenge of rewarding his lifelong friend. In July 1877, at a public meeting Monds convened in Launceston, it was resolved to canvass a public subscription (individual subscriptions were limited to 10 shillings) and to petition the governor-in-council about a larger grant of land or money to Smith.¹³⁵ The first measure would give Smith’s friends and the public a chance to express their gratitude symbolically and the latter, by taxing all Smith’s beneficiaries, offer substantial public recognition. That most of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company directors with whom Smith had disagreed – William Ritchie, Alfred Harrop, William Hart and Richard Green – set aside these differences to sit on the committee testifies to the esteem in which he was held. They were, after all, his beneficiaries. So, already, the reward envisaged had grown beyond the initial idea of compensating Smith for the inadequacy of legislation that might otherwise, at the discretion of the governor-in-council, have paid him £5,000. Separate ‘symbolic’ and ‘substantial’ rewards were required.

The ‘symbolic’ part was enacted by Governor Weld¹³⁶ at the Municipal Council Chamber in Launceston in February 1878. Given only two days notice of the testimonial presentation, Smith had to hotfoot it to town by horse and train. Even shorter notification of the public ensured an intimate ceremony. Two-hundred-and-fifty sovereigns were piled on a silver salver. The address itself was inscribed on vellum along with a stylised Tasmanian bush scene accurate down to the insect pests. Unfortunately, the same attention had not been directed to the inscription on the salver, which read cryptically:

¹³³ ‘Palham, Qui Meruit, Ferat’, ‘Minerals and Explorers’, *Cornwall Chronicle* 23 July 1877

¹³⁴ for example, ‘Watchman’ (Thomas Hainsworth), ‘Mount Bischoff and its Discoverer’, *Examiner* 2 September 1878

¹³⁵ ‘Public Testimonial: to Mr James Smith’, *Examiner* 19 July 1877

¹³⁶ See T S Louch, ‘Sir Frederick Aloysius Weld (1823-91)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.377-9.

Presented to Mr James Smith [of] Westwood, River Forth, as the first discoverer of Ten [tin] Mines in Tasmania in the year 1872 [1871].¹³⁷

The Governor read the address:

To James Smith, Esq, Westwood, River Forth, Tasmania. Dear Sir, -

For many years you have given yourself up to the work of exploring the mineral resources of Tasmania, struggling with hunger, cold, and weariness; facing with a manful courage all kinds of difficulties and disappointments, until, to use your own words, 'death or victory should settle the question.'

Such quiet heroism, apart from all question of success, would have merited and won our approval; but we are glad to be able to congratulate you as the First Discoverer of a workable Tin mine in Tasmania on Monday, the Fourth Day of December, 1871, and thus preparing the way for other discoveries of great value.

It is not saying too much when we declare our firm conviction that to you, more than to any living man, our colony owes its present state of prosperity. As the fair result of your discovery, property has increased in value, commerce has developed, the tide of immigration has turned to our shores, and all classes of the population have been benefited.

As a community we owe you much honour, because we know that in your prolonged search you were more anxious to benefit the colony than yourself; and as a small proof of our sincere gratitude to you as a public benefactor, and our high appreciation of your character as a man, we respectfully beg your acceptance of the accompanying purse of 250 sovereigns [worth £250]. Wishing for Mrs Smith, yourself, and children, long life and much happiness. We are, dear sir, on behalf

¹³⁷ William Ritchie to Smith 22 February 1878, no. 68, NS234/3/7 (AOT). The wording was later corrected. The salver is now on display in the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston.

of the subscribers - WILLIAM LAW, Chairman; WILLIAM RITCHIE, Hon Sec; E D HARROP, Hon Treas.

In response Smith styled himself a 'humble instrument' of God-given prosperity. 'Tasmania', he said,

should be deeply grateful to Divine Providence, for having stored up immense treasures of easily available [!] mineral wealth against the day of her utmost pecuniary need, to save her from perplexity, trouble, and sorrow, and to spread prosperity throughout her length and breadth, and raise her to her proper position in relation to the Australian colonies.¹³⁸

In July 1878, colonial treasurer W R Giblin raised the matter of the 'substantial' reward by offering Smith three options: a capital sum; an annuity; or two blocks of mineral-bearing land at a peppercorn rental. Smith wanted the cash:

This, besides other advantages, would the better enable me to make permanent provision for my young family and I feel this the more necessary from my having sustained internal injuries from over-exertion and from a fall while engaged in my explorations.¹³⁹

Clearly, he worried that his family would be impoverished by his death or disablement. Aside from his prospecting injuries, the adult Smith's health was never robust, middle age in particular being marred by bouts of severe illness. From the 1870s onwards he also suffered from neuralgia.

Louisa Ann Meredith's case should have sounded a stern warning to the likes of Giblin about the difficulty of prying open the public purse.¹⁴⁰ By 1878 she had been campaigning for ten years for a pension; in all it would take her 16 years of self-promotion to get her £100 annuity, including a personal audience with the Duke of Edinburgh, who passed on her memorial to Queen Victoria; and an appeal to Sir Henry

¹³⁸ 'Discovery of Tin in Tasmania: Presentation to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 9 February 1878

¹³⁹ Smith to colonial treasurer 31 July 1878, with letter no. 250, NS234/3/7 (AOT)

¹⁴⁰ See Sally O'Neill, 'Louisa Ann Meredith (1812-95) and Charles Meredith (1811-80)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp.239-40.

Parkes that he write to Gladstone in support of her case for a civil list pension. She believed the pension was warranted by her contributions to Tasmanian society and culture over the course of 40 years.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, it seems to have taken the death of Meredith's husband Charles, a prominent parliamentarian (whose estate was worth only £690) in 1880 to stir things along. This was not a case of politicians or 'nobs' looking after their own, even if friends in high places helped Meredith get her just desert, since parliament eventually agreed that 'by her writings and paintings [she has] rendered considerable services to the cause of Science, Literature and Art in Tasmania...'¹⁴²

Pensions were generally reserved for career public servants who had slipped through a loophole of the superannuation system. In 1898 retired Supreme Court judge Robert Adams would receive a £600 annuity along these lines; six years later a mere clerk of that institution pocketed £450.¹⁴³ Public pressure was the only avenue open to anyone else.

James Smith had no allies in London, but he did have friends in the Tasmanian parliament. Even so, despite James Dooley's enthusiasm in the matter, parliamentary recognition was exactly what the Smith Testimonial Committee insisted it should not be - begrudging. Perhaps the House of Assembly banked on Smith's early demise, because they refused him the sum of £3,000 proposed by Giblin in favour of the potentially cheaper annuity of £200 - an amount that can hardly have drained the coffers, given that a retired Presbyterian minister, John Storie, was voted a £300 pension the same day that Smith's entitlement was debated by the House of Assembly.¹⁴⁴ (Presumably £3,000, not £5,000, at that time seemed to Giblin and the governor-in-council a fair estimate of Mount Bischoff's worth, in 'gold' terms. The 'mountain of tin' and its north-eastern tin companions had not yet peaked. Perhaps also, Giblin realistically could not imagine parliament 'putting its money where its mouth was' by coughing up £5,000 even when it was merited.)

¹⁴¹ Vivienne Rae-Ellis, *Louisa Ann Meredith: a Tigress in Exile*, St David's Park, Hobart, 1990 (originally published 1979), p.62

¹⁴² *Louisa Ann Meredith Pension Act* (1884)

¹⁴³ *Judge Adams' Pension Act* (1898); *George Browne Pension Act* (1904)

It is the way of things in Australian mining, according to Blainey, that mines are heavily taxed when they are productive, even though government help has been begrudged in setting up their infrastructure at the development stage. So it had proven with Mount Bischoff. Then, many years further on, when the mine that has brought prosperity is almost exhausted, its now long-established local member has enough political clout to obtain its old-age pension, keeping it on the artificial respirator until, finally, not even that can sustain it.¹⁴⁵

So it was also with Tasmania's successful nineteenth-century prospectors. The government offered few incentives to their work, even though this had the potential to make the colony rich. No reward was offered in the spirit of gratitude when a prospector did strike it rich, but when he reached his declining years, exciting the pity of a now long-established, mining-field parliamentarian, a pension was usually forthcoming in the knowledge that the veteran's imminent death would minimise the outlay.

The parliamentary opponents of Smith's reward, Henry Lette, Dr Butler and Thomas Reibey, objected that Smith was not the first discoverer of tin in the colony; that others were equally entitled to recompense; that he had publicised his discovery only after he had secured the best of it for himself; and that by granting Smith a reward claim to begin with the government had already placed a fortune in Smith's hands which he had squandered.¹⁴⁶

The claim that Peter Lette found tin at the Flowerdale River a dozen years before Smith's find can be dismissed as sibling loyalty (if not mischief) on the part of his parliamentary brother, Henry. The ever-optimistic surveyor's 'tin' was worthless titaniferous iron.¹⁴⁷ If a challenge was to be made to the claim that Smith made the first tin find in Tasmania it might have come from Charles Gould or perhaps even S B Emmett. Gould and others before him had found small quantities of tin in the Furneaux

¹⁴⁴ *James Smith Pension Act* (1879); *John Storie Pension Act* (1879)

¹⁴⁵ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.280

¹⁴⁶ 'Parliamentary Notes', *Examiner* 21 October 1878. A 'reward' claim was a rent-free mining lease granted to the first discoverer of a particular mineral in a new area, a measure designed to encourage prospecting in remote regions.

¹⁴⁷ T H S (Thomas Hainsworth), 'The Late Mr P Lette's Discoveries', *Examiner* 24 October 1878

Islands group,¹⁴⁸ and it is remotely possible that Emmett discovered Mount Bischoff tin while prospecting the lower Arthur River in 1861, although there is no evidence he ever made such a claim. A ton of black sand removed from the river at this time was tested in England. Although contemporary reports¹⁴⁹ do not list tin amongst the minerals found in the sand, Emmett's son Skelton believed it contained tin,¹⁵⁰ and in 1909, when a reward was offered to the first discoverer of tin on the west coast of Tasmania, several of Emmett's 1861 trip companions entered imaginative claims.¹⁵¹) Henry Lette perhaps held a grudge against Smith from a public exchange in July 1874 when, as a Mount Bischoff Company shareholder, he (Lette) had complained about the system of one vote per share, which 'practically placed the whole of the power in the hands of one or two shareholders.' Smith, then the largest shareholder, had responded wryly that

if it was unusual to give such a power in other companies, he would remind Mr Lette that it was also most unusual to obtain such a valuable mine upon such easy terms. (Laughter.)¹⁵²

No matter how this witticism resonated, Mount Bischoff produced the first *payable* tin found in Tasmania. That Peter Lette's was the only name raised makes a mockery of the allegation that others were equally deserving of recompense.

That leaves two criticisms, that Smith had only publicised his discovery after first securing the best of it for himself; and that he had already squandered a fortune that the government had placed in his hands, through his own improvidence. In the following discussion about the 'spirit' of prospecting, it will be shown that the first of these claims was preposterous, and that together they were ambiguous: the first complaint was that he was not generous enough; the second, apparently, that he was *too* generous. This was the man of whom Thomas Monds had reportedly said, 'he was not fond of money; in fact Mr Smith was too easy, and perhaps none too well to take care of it when he had

¹⁴⁸ See J E Carne, *The Tin-Mining Industry and the Distribution of Ores in New South Wales*, Mineral Resources no. 14, New South Wales Department of Mines, Sydney, 1911, p.5 and following.

¹⁴⁹ 'Black Sand', *Examiner* 13 September 1862, p.5; 'Black Sand', *Examiner* 18 September 1862, p.5; 'Black Sand from the Hellyer', *Examiner* 30 September 1862, p.5

¹⁵⁰ Skelton Emmett junior to E T Emmett 18 June 1914, NS1010/1 (AOT)

¹⁵¹ See Mines Department of Tasmania file 'Re First Discovery of Tin on the West Coast', AB948/7/79 (AOT).

it,¹⁵³ and whom Charles Gould called 'too liberal, and too princely in [his] ideas.'¹⁵⁴

Henry Button took Smith's critics to task:

From the character of the discussion that took place...it might be supposed that Mr Smith was an imbecile or a spendthrift, instead of an honest, intelligent, generous man. He is one of that small class who can never pass unheeded an appeal for help if they possess the means of giving it, even though it should result in their own loss - a trait of character so seldom exhibited that no wonder it should excite pity!¹⁵⁵

Smith was anything but a wastrel. Thrift and discipline were the habits of a lifetime; even when he could afford to be charitable, he used his money wisely, not indiscriminately.¹⁵⁶ He did, however, sell three-quarters of his Mount Bischoff shares when they were worth less than £3 each. By the time of the parliamentary debate over his pension, Mount Bischoff Company shares fetched about £16. Within a further two years, as the Brown Face divulged its riches, they would reach their decade-long plateau of about £50 or more.

The Smith legend insists that his shares were relinquished along with his directorship as an expression of disgust at the mine management of Ferd Kayser. A 1903 account even stretches Smith's Mount Bischoff losses into an improvident life: 'He lost all his money, and then he lost his good farm, through the insatiable desire for metal-hunting.'¹⁵⁷ The story that the Philosopher disposed of his shares over a matter of principle without receiving a dividend has survived into the modern era, being asserted, for instance, in Geoffrey Blainey's *The Peaks of Lyell* (1954) and Margery Godfrey's *Waratah - Pioneer of the West* (1984).¹⁵⁸ In fact those 3,300 shares (of 4,400 allocated to him) had gone before any hint of disagreement with Kayser, and the last of the

¹⁵² 'Mt Bischoff', *Cornwall Chronicle* 15 July 1874

¹⁵³ 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 9 July 1877

¹⁵⁴ Charles Gould to Smith 28 September 1880, no. 362, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

¹⁵⁵ leader, *Examiner* 17 October 1878

¹⁵⁶ 'Fecit Suo More', 'James Smith', *Examiner* 22 October 1878

¹⁵⁷ J S, *In Tasman's Land: Gleams and Dreams of the Great North-West*, Emu Bay Railway Company, 1903, p.18

¹⁵⁸ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p.13; Margery Godfrey, *Waratah - Pioneer of the West*, Municipality of Waratah, 1984, p.9

remaining 1,100 were not sold until 1895, after more than 200 dividends had been paid.¹⁵⁹ While thanking Button for his words of support, Smith offered an explanation:

It appears that I am greatly blamed by some people for foreseeing the depreciation of tin and selling a large number of shares at a price which renders investment on the part of the purchasers secure as to profits and for buying fencing and stocking land which land is in perpetuity whereas the mines are on lease for a term of years.¹⁶⁰

He sold shares when he anticipated a drop in the market price of tin, as small as it must have seemed later in the overall scheme of things. Instead of buying them back when their value had probably bottomed, Smith chose to secure his family's future by investing in real estate, in which he had greater faith than mining scrip, a need made more urgent by his failing health. He had shored up his prospecting career with property: why change now? (Having been tantalised by the phantom Griffiths estate, members of the Smith family could be forgiven for wishing that the Mount Bischoff maestro had chosen his property more wisely.) No one knew just how valuable the shares would become. Smith knew from the Penguin debacle that there was no guarantee of success, even with a mine that, as he predicted in 1876 (and after selling 3,300 Mount Bischoff Company shares), 'will probably be worked for centuries'.¹⁶¹

This is a Cornishman speaking. Smith's model, no doubt, for this idea was Cornwall's Dolcoath lode tin mine, which had been producing tin for more than a century, and copper long before that. The guiding lights through the infancy of Australian tin mining were Cornish mines and Cornishmen, to whom Ireland attributes the disastrous attempts at lode-mining on the north-eastern tin fields in 1876. The Cornishmen gave

the impression...that a tin lode was worth all the alluvial, because it would practically last for ever, and the alluvial tin would soon be worked out. We apparently had Cornish mines on the brain, and some of our

¹⁵⁹ Smith to Henry Ritchie 29 August 1895, no. 601, NS234/2/18 (AOT). Under Mount Bischoff Company rules a director needed to hold at least 1,000 shares.

¹⁶⁰ Smith to Henry Button 21 October 1878, no. 450, NS234/2/4 (AOT)

¹⁶¹ Smith to Charles Sprent 24 July 1976, no. 202, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

Cornish friends, I am afraid, encouraged the impression that there was nothing like a tin lode.¹⁶²

The alluvial deposits of Mount Bischoff and the north-east were not the tip of lode 'icebergs', and by the end of the nineteenth-century, with the development of the immense Malayan alluvial tin fields, the Dolcoath lode mine would seem like an aberration rather than the world norm. This was not the last time that Smith would succumb to 'blinkered' Cornish notions of metal lodes. He did blunder by selling so many shares so early: his family could have had their property *and* the money. In his defence, however, it must be remembered that poverty and the Penguin silver mine debacle had probably made him over-cautious, that the ownership of property was central to the Victorian Puritan ethic, and that with the consistent but marginally viable Cornish lode tin mines as his model, he would have imagined at best a low share price and regular small dividends, instead of the Mount Bischoff share 'sky-rocket' which actually followed.

Given the wealth that Smith generated by discovering the Mount Bischoff tin and sparking the mining industry, a pension of £200 per year should never have been begrudged. Smith's pension turned out to be by far the biggest reward paid to any nineteenth-century Tasmanian prospector, amounting to £3,800 over 19 years. Following the passage of the *Mary Jane Smith Pension Act* after his death, Mary Jane Smith continued to receive a £100 annuity. Together their pensions paid out £6,800, about six times as much as that received by the next most fortunate discoverers, Mount Lyell's Mick McDonough [£1,200] and George Renison and Phoebe Bell [£1,155-8-10]. Smith's pension is about on par with the reward given Paddy Hannan, discoverer of gold at Kalgoorlie. In 1898 Hannan was granted two blocks of land at Kalgoorlie, and in 1907, 14 years after making the discovery, an annuity of £100 was added, which rose to £125 in 1910 and £150 in 1911. Hannan received £2,925 by the time of his death in

¹⁶² Mark Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast of Tasmania from 1876 to 1913*, *Examiner*, Launceston, 1915?, p.68

1925.¹⁶³ (In comparison, the might of imperial commerce and prestige gave the family of the world-famous David Livingstone a pension of £2,000 per year after his death in 1873.¹⁶⁴) So, as it was, Smith had money to invest in prospecting, now usually conducted by proxy, in the on-going search for the next Bischoff.

Smith's place in the 'spirit' of prospecting

The criticisms of Smith raised in parliament need to be examined closely, since they raise common and conflicting assumptions about the 'spirit' of mineral prospecting. The first criticism seems to suggest that Smith failed in his duty to be a selfless benefactor; the second that he was a wastrel. (Equally ambiguous is the implication of these charges, that the government had apparently already seen fit to reward the 'selfish' Smith for securing the best of Mount Bischoff for himself, by granting him the small consideration of a reward lease.)

These are the two basic cliches used to explain a truism which has been repeated almost into infinity. Just as great artists, apparently, cannot sell a painting, so the prospector 'is rarely the man who reaps any benefit from his arduous labours.'¹⁶⁵ His options for losing that 'benefit' are: because he is ignorant or a fool (wastrel); or because he gives it away (selfless benefactor). On the one hand is the bumpkin shepherd who happens upon a fortune, the grub-staked alcoholic prospector, and the gold rush binger, who is his own worst enemy, easily fleeced by those with more nous or by his own dissolute ways ('A fool and his money are soon parted'¹⁶⁶ suited the Victorian Puritan equation of poverty with idleness.) On the other hand is the knight errant who lives only for the betterment of mankind, as in the Victorian 'heroic' ideal, exemplified by

¹⁶³ Tess Thomson, *Paddy Hannan: a Claim to Fame*, Thomsons Reward, Kalgoorlie, 1992, pp.39 and 41; Clive Turnbull, *Australian Lives*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, 1965, p.145

¹⁶⁴ J S Robertson, *The Life of David Livingstone, L L D, the Great Missionary*, Murdoch and Co Ltd, London, 1882, p.315

¹⁶⁵ Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast*, p.29

David Livingstone. To put it simply, the prospector is either a 'mug' or a martyr. The result of their work is the same: fortunes accrue to others, while the finder collects not a single dollar.

Members of the first category have no need of good character, since they usually have the dispensation of class oppression or poor education. According to Wolfgang Paul, Henry 'Old Pancake' Comstock, a Nevada shepherd nicknamed after his suspiciously preoccupied flapjack tossing (a poor 'poker face'), suicided a few years after being swindled out of one of history's greatest treasures.¹⁶⁷ Greever claims that Comstock had 'few virtues, with little concept of right or wrong', and that he was 'talented at concocting lies'.¹⁶⁸ (Comstock's reward was that his howls of treachery became synonymous with the mine he lost: in its name, the Comstock mine assured his place in history if not in high society.)

Some discoverers or 'moral' owners of natural riches, such as Mount Lyell's Mick McDonough, carry the agony of betrayal for the rest of their lives.¹⁶⁹ James Marshall was another. The lament of the sawmiller who sparked the Californian gold rushes, till his dying day, apparently, was 'I was robbed'.¹⁷⁰ His memorialist even tries to credit him as the unheralded founder of the *Australian* gold rushes, suggesting that when Edward Hargraves was digging in California, Marshall told him to dig 'down under'.¹⁷¹ Even Smith, according to one story, rode a Comstock to the top. In 'The Story of Bischoff', Smith finds the famous tin not on a mountainside but on an ignorant stockman's table in his equally rude hut. 'There is a mountain of the stuff over there a bit!', 'Dicey' [Charles Drury, the Field brothers' Surrey Hills stockman] says dismissively, waving away his fortune. Dicey's reward for his tin discovery is to become dogfood after dying penniless

¹⁶⁶ Bertram Barker, *North of '53: the Adventures of a Trapper and Prospector in the Canadian Far North*, Methuen & Co, London, 1934, p.80

¹⁶⁷ George D Lyman, *The Saga of the Comstock Lode: Boom Days in Virginia City*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1934, p.31

¹⁶⁸ William S Greever, *The Bonanza West: the Story of the Western Mining Rushes, 1848-1900*, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, 1963, p.90

¹⁶⁹ 'A Prospector's View', *Examiner* 11 October 1909, p.2

¹⁷⁰ G F Parsons, *The Life and Adventures of James W Marshall, the Discoverer of Gold in California*, George Fields, San Francisco, 1935, p.56

¹⁷¹ G Ezra Dane, Introduction to Parsons, *The Life and Adventures of James W Marshall*, p.XIII

in his hut.¹⁷² Did Smith even mention tin to Drury when he staggered into the stockman's hut on his return journey from Mount Bischoff in 1871? There is no suggestion of it in his account.¹⁷³

The outposted shepherd and the grub-staked prospector were often of the same ilk: that is, alcoholic misfits best removed from the town.¹⁷⁴ Jakins's Tasmanian west coast prospectors were, at their bush camp, 'devoted to their mates to the extent of their lives' - but in town 'abjectly surrendered to beer and publican and thought no more of double-crossing their mates than trumping their ace at cards. Money had no more lodgment with them than water in a sieve.'¹⁷⁵ They appear to be the 'poor cousin' of the rollicking gold rush binger.¹⁷⁶ District surveyor Richard Hall perhaps invoked the 'Mr Hyde' side of Jakins's prospector when he gave Smith his impressions of the wandering mining population of the Mount Bischoff region:

I...began to think that a great many of them follow the occupation as long as they can get enough to eat so as to enable them to lead a lazy dissolute life - where there is no police, clergymen, nor any restraining influence to be brought to bear upon them - I have never been so disgusted by a number of men, in any place, that I have ever been before.¹⁷⁷

There are echoes here of Richard Flanagan's description of the Gordon River piners' world, which

was one that remained outside, and largely untouched by, the various authorities that have come to permeate present society...a small victory over symbols of a repressive world.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² That is, his starving cattle-dogs ate his remains ('The Story of Bischoff: the World's Greatest Tin Mine', *Advocate* 24 April 1923, p.4).

¹⁷³ Smith notes, 'Exploring', NS234/14/3 (AOT)

¹⁷⁴ See, for instance, the account of Fields' alcoholic Gads Hill stockman Harry Stanley ('Beautiful Tasmania: no. 10: In Forest and Mountain Wilds', *Examiner* 17 June 1893, p.10).

¹⁷⁵ G Ted Jakins to J R Henry 12 October 1955; cited by Binks, *Pioneers*, p.40

¹⁷⁶ See, for instance, Barker, *North of '53*, p.78.

¹⁷⁷ Richard Hall to Smith 31 March 1883, no. 100, NS234/3/12 (AOT)

¹⁷⁸ Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country*, Greenhouse, Richmond, Victoria, 1985, p.74

Men of little stature in the town, according to Ireland, become heroic in the bush - or *because* of the bush. As Smith styled his prospecting a matter of 'death or victory', Ireland's many tales of mateship in the bush form a constant joust with the grim reaper, as if it is by grappling with the elements of life, like Livingstone or Burke and Wills, that man is ennobled. Enthused with nostalgia for his youth, Ireland's spirit of adventure is a long way from Hall's paternalistic Christian spirit. He recalls

a fine stamp of men - the stamp you always find in new places where hardship, privation, death, and disease are to be faced - not the stay-at-homes, who hug the pavements, but the pioneer who makes the way...good, hardy, stalwart fellows.¹⁷⁹

Bravado like that and Jakins's dichotomy of the prospector make it clear that the border checkpoints between mug and martyr are not well-defended. Many descriptions of prospectors blur the fine line between *dissolute* (that is, like Frank Long and like Jakins's prospector, he cannot handle money) and *beneficent* (that is, wanting others to have the fortune instead of himself). Joseph Wills, the shepherd who made the first payable tin find in Australia, for instance, had this epitaph:

Here lieth poor Wills who found our tin,
But very little did he win;
He paved the way for others' gains,
And died neglected for his pains.¹⁸⁰

The poor shepherd as sacrificial martyr is not terribly convincing. It is more likely that Wills could not raise the money to mine the tin, or lost his claim to others who possessed a better understanding of its value. As for his 'paving', Wills found the tin by accident on his stock-run.¹⁸¹

It is not a long stretch from this ambivalent position, and no stretch at all from Ireland's magnificent prospector, to the saga of George Fairweather Moonlight, as

¹⁷⁹ Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East and West Coast*, p.43

¹⁸⁰ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.129

¹⁸¹ Carne, *The Tin-Mining Industry and the Distribution of Ores in New South Wales*, p.5 and following.

romanticised by Boyd.¹⁸² While the Comstocks of this world blow their brains out, drown their sorrows or waste away in misery, the Moonlights are *philosophers*, philanthropists and, equally importantly, adventurers for whom the lifestyle is payment enough:

The voices of solitude have for him an unending sweetness... His humble grave may be marked, or may be forgotten, while marble shafts rise to extol those who but for the work of his hands might have shared his obscure poverty.¹⁸³

Similarly, Wolfgang Paul cites a description of the prospector as a roaming ascetic:

He climbs like a huge fly upon the bald skull of some lofty mountain, and the primeval hills welcome his daring footsteps. He taps with the prospector's pick at the adamantine doors of the earth's treasure chambers; and at his demand they reveal their shining secrets. His glittering ax [sic] lays low the green plumed forest, and on the surface of emerald prairies he marks the site of cities yet to be. Not for him the science of the schools; not for him the sweet solaces of life. But he reads the story of the ages written upon the silent rocks, and hears the tale of mysterious forests told by the silent stars; and the priest-robed mountains, the smiling lakes, the white-lipped sunsets are his palaces and his kindred.¹⁸⁴

And when, to his horror, these various talismans reveal to him their precious glitters, he presumably runs squealing for the nearest fount of holy water, so as to wash from his pure hands the contamination of human greed.

Boyd's martyr and those cited by Wolfgang Paul differ from Ireland's magnificent prospector for, although we may be assured that he is the king of mateship, a sterling fellow, the true martyr, like Livingstone, works alone, either literally, or in the loneliness

¹⁸² J Paton Boyd, *Moonlight: New Zealand's Pre-eminent Gold Prospector*, Murchison Historical and Museum Society, Murchison, New Zealand, 1971, pp.8,14 and 23

¹⁸³ W A Chalfant, *Gold, Guns, and Ghost Towns*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, date unknown; cited in Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore: an Illustrated Composition and Documentary Compilation With Emphasis on the Spirit and History of Mines*, Portland, Oregon, 1970, pp.594-5

of command of a party. Boyd's Moonlight has all the elements of the Smith legend: the romantic nickname, which in this case is apparently enshrined on the birth register, the ascetic disdain of money, self-sacrifice, incorruptibility, even the heroic (but in Moonlight's case sanctifying) return to the fray. According to Boyd, the name Fairweather Moonlight inspired a legend *not* that he was an associate of the New-Zealand-emigree, Australian bushranger Captain Moonlite¹⁸⁵ (despite the prospector often being referred to in his Otago days as 'Captain Moonlight'¹⁸⁶), but that, seemingly, he was a foundling marked, Christ-like, by a light from the heavens.¹⁸⁷ Add a given name which acknowledged the reigning monarch, and he was superbly equipped for martyrdom. He had been a 'forty-niner', and then a 'fifty-oner' in Australia.¹⁸⁸ The Otago gold rushes of 1861 engaged his 'near genius flair for nosing out auriferous country', as did, apparently, the Nelson district, where he made his fabulous finds.¹⁸⁹

Shunning the fortune due to him, to the point of not even taking a reward claim, with 'princely benevolence', Moonlight left the spoils to others, according to Boyd, preferring to serve his fellow man by accommodating, counselling and grub-staking other prospectors (perhaps the name 'Moonlight' was given him that he might steal away by it once he had found his Eldorado). This pioneering show of faith in the development of New Zealand, together with incorruptible honesty, drove him to insolvency.¹⁹⁰

Then, in 1884, at the age of 55, Moonlight came out of retirement for a final, fatal prospecting expedition. Uncanny bushcraft could not save him from death by exposure, although his final, stiffened pose, which might have glorified him further, is not described. A monument applauds his and his wife's 'unwearied energy, perseverance and self-sacrifice...in developing the gold mining industry of the Provincial District of

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Fitch, 1871; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.595

¹⁸⁵ See 'Andrew George Scott (Captain Moonlite) (1842-80)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.94-5.

¹⁸⁶ Boyd, *Moonlight*, p.13

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p.7

¹⁸⁸ *ibid*, p.13

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, p.14

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*, pp.19-20

Nelson, and in pursuit of which George Moonlight died.¹⁹¹ Boyd's Moonlight is almost the essence of Wolfgang Paul's noble pioneer in virgin territory:

Failure never daunts him; his is the optimism that never falters. Rarely does he reap the reward of his persistence. Hard on the heels of any good fortune that comes to him the speculator arrives to garner the lion's share. The prospector then takes up his bedroll and sets forth anew, seeking other goldfields, and perhaps again to see others gather the harvest.¹⁹²

Here again, though, the fine line between mug and martyr is blurred. The prospector seems to be portrayed as both victim and benefactor at once. The speculator comes to reap the prospector's reward; yet the prospector seems to abandon it. Why does he not learn how to bargain with the speculator? Is it theft if the fortune is abandoned by its finder? Moonlight is nobler than that: he is a Puritan masochist who simply *will not tolerate* personal gain from his hard work and 'genius'. He is, like Chalfant's pioneer prospector of the American west, a knight errant:

The men - and women - who brought the West from savagery to civilization boasted no armorial bearings and cared nothing for the affectation of family crests. They adopted no fantastic rules of chivalry, yet among them were many as noble in character, fearlessness, and achievement as any who ever donned armor.¹⁹³

Mining men with haloes are not rare. As Wolfgang Paul states, it is a 'stirring' profession,¹⁹⁴ and it must have been even more stirring in the days when there appears to have been a common belief that chivalry reigned. Up there with Smith and Moonlight is John W Mackay, the archetypal American self-made multi-millionaire and, seemingly, the George Washington of the Comstock silver mine. The scion of poor Irish stock, the Dublin-born, self-educated, Roman Catholic Mackay set out only to make enough

¹⁹¹ *ibid*, p.21

¹⁹² Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.597

¹⁹³ W A Chalfant, *Gold, Guns, and Ghost Towns*; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.594

¹⁹⁴ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.589

money to keep his mother comfortable. As he learned the ropes he also overpowered a chronic stutter, until no one doubted his word:

His character was as clear as the lines of the Washington Monument. Men always knew where he stood. So truthful that even cynical old John Kelly admitted, 'John Mackay never lies.' A thing was either right or wrong - there was no shading between. A biographer of Sir Walter Scott might have been speaking of Mackay when he said: 'He was a man essentially, who kept his deeper feelings to himself, knew no smallness or meanness, loved simple things and simple people, and was of quiet heroic courage.'¹⁹⁵

Most of the metaphors tally with descriptions of Smith:

Loyalty was second nature....So modest was he that he shrank from praise: 'Anything approaching flattery was an affliction'...Absorbed in business, yet somehow, finding time to think what he could do for others. Always thinking of somebody else...¹⁹⁶

Smith was a man of

upright character, whose standard of principle was thought by some to approach the quixotic. He led an exemplary life, and is described by one who was infinitely associated with him for a number of years as without a vice. He was kindly thoughtful [sic], generous almost to a fault...¹⁹⁷

Surprisingly, Mackay is allowed some vices: he was no Puritan, having been known to smoke, drink and swear. Like Smith's,

his name was constantly on people's lips - almost invariably with words of praise. Everything about him was distinctive: his modesty, his reserve, his unfailing kindness to old friends, his innumerable benefactions, his uprightness...¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Grant H Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode 1850-1920*, Nevada Bureau of Mines, University of Nevada, Reno, 1966, pp.264-5; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.585

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ 'Death of Mr Jas Smith', *Daily Telegraph* 16 June 1897

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*

In the classical rhetoric of self-improvement, Mackay dismisses the suggestion that wealth has made him happy. Why, the ennobling struggle was his mantra:

I was very happy during my early struggles with poverty. I enjoyed the toil, privation, and hardship I endured to win wealth. When a laborer in a New York shipyard, when swinging a pick and shovel as a miner, I was as happy as I can ever be... I do not think wealth brings happiness.¹⁹⁹

No doubt Smith would have given a similar same answer, if not from the roof of his personal Fort Knox: his fortune was largely a 'paper' one. Smith also professed, however, that 'Self-denial is a glorious thing.'²⁰⁰

A rich philanthropist may be *doubly* sainted: as a self-made man *and* a benefactor. For all their generosity, Mackay retained his wealth. He could afford sacrifices in the name of honour and truth. He could afford to love 'simple things and simple people', since he did not have to have them or be them.

A great prospector, however, unlike the great speculator, apparently, should *give* away his fortune. So it is, according to legend, with Moonlight, Mulligan and George Renison Bell (and so it should be for Smith, according to the arbiters of his reward). In the hands of his memorialist, the gold and tin discoverer Mulligan ('Far North Queensland's greatest prospector and explorer and one of the finest men who ever lived.'²⁰¹) joins Moonlight in prospector heaven. Like Moonlight, Mulligan was branded at birth (his middle name, 'Venture', fitted him for both stirring exploration and business) and failed the storekeeper test (like Smith, he was *too* generous), proving him to be an ascetic.²⁰² One almost expects lightning to strike when Moonlight or Mulligan strides

¹⁹⁹ Grant H Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode*, pp.264-5; cited in Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.586

²⁰⁰ Smith letter and poem, March? 1895, after no. 409, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

²⁰¹ James Venture Mulligan, *On the Trail of Gold: the Story of James Venture Mulligan, North Queensland's Greatest Prospector-Explorer: an Autobiography Quoted by Glenville Pike with Commentary*, Mareeba, Glenville Pike, 1998, p.126. See H J Gibbney, 'James Venture Mulligan (1837-1907)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 5, Melbourne University Press, 1974, pp.310-1.

²⁰² Mulligan, *On the Trail of Gold*, introduction by Glenville Pike, p.V

forth, as it does when the protagonist of the hagiographic baseball movie, *The Natural*, steps up to the plate, brandishing 'Excalibur'.²⁰³

Smith's legendary altruism appears to stack up well against those of Moonlight and Mulligan. There are many tributes to Smith's self-sacrifice, perseverance and beneficence which put him in their mythical league, especially a quote from the prospector Alec Hill, who recalled Smith saying that 'it was for the good it would do the country than for self interest that prompted you to make your tours of discovery'.²⁰⁴ Most are not attributed to Smith's own lips. ('Few have the general good at heart like your own dear self,' as Mary Jane Love reminded her fiancé in 1873.²⁰⁵) Nearly all of these were voiced in vindication of a friend or admired acquaintance as part of the movement to reward Smith for his efforts.²⁰⁶ They include the testimonials of his old friends Thomas Monds and Thomas Hainsworth. Monds stated that 'I believe he was actuated by patriotic motives - a desire to benefit the land of his birth'.²⁰⁷ Hainsworth wrote that:

I know, even in his least promising day, where he gave one thought for himself he gave a dozen for Tasmania, and his whole soul was burning with a desire to do something for his native home,²⁰⁸

and that

his self-denial did not arise from callousness or an incapacity to enjoy, but it was genuine self-sacrifice from purely patriotic motives...²⁰⁹

These are rhetorical statements and, regardless of their provenance close to Smith, must be discounted as evidence that philanthropy was his primary motivation, as must the tribute made by his testimonial committee. Governor Du Cane read that

²⁰³ *The Natural* (1984), written by Roger Towne and directed by Barry Levinson, stars Robert Redford.

²⁰⁴ Alec Hill to Smith 20 September 1877, no. 189, NS234/3/6 (AOT)

²⁰⁵ Mary Jane Love to Smith 10 March 1873, no. 123, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

²⁰⁶ See, for example, 'A P', 'James Smith, Tasmania's Benefactor', *Examiner* 30 October 1878; and Reverend Canon Hales, 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877.

²⁰⁷ 'Tasmanian' (Thomas Monds), 'The Discovery of Tin', *Examiner* 5 July 1877

²⁰⁸ Thomas Hainsworth, 'James Smith', *Examiner* 4 June 1878

²⁰⁹ 'Fecit Suo More', 'James Smith', *Examiner* 22 October 1878

As a community we owe you much honor, because we know that in your prolonged search you were more anxious to benefit the colony than yourself...²¹⁰

The governor then added some words of his own, including the typical Victorian view that 'no success can be deemed quite complete unless it has with it some touch of self-sacrifice.'²¹¹

He said it: *self-sacrifice must be found in order to create a hero*. Almost as telling is William Law's statement that 'even if Mr Smith had not been successful a public testimonial would have been very fitting.'²¹² Some of the greatest British heroes, including Gordon of Khartoum and Scott of the Antarctic, have been glorious failures. While describing the failed, self-proclaimed Victorian British explorer Winwood Reade, Driver speaks of 'the peculiar skill of the Victorians to turn failure into a kind of martyrdom...'²¹³ The spirit displayed was more important than the result. Divine, who seems stuck in a hagiographic time-warped, describes Robert Scott's party's fatal trudge across the ice, after being beaten to the South Pole by Roald Amundsen, not in terms of defeat or disappointment, but of collective inspiration:

There is in these last marches, in the pitiful eight miles that they achieved, one of the great flowerings of the English spirit.... This is the endurance that held the walls of Lucknow. This is the heroism that took the last of the horses through the guns at Balaclava. This, a generation after Scott had died, was the fire that brought an army off from the white sand beaches of Dunkirk.²¹⁴

This appears to be a similar transition to that cited by Davison, who describes how the Great War prompted Australians to replace individual heroes with a collective hero

²¹⁰ 'Discovery of Tin in Tasmania: Presentation to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 9 February 1878

²¹¹ *ibid*

²¹² 'Public Testimonial to Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 19 July 1877

²¹³ Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, p.92

²¹⁴ David Divine, *Six Great Explorers: Frobisher, Cook, Mungo Park, Burton, Livingstone, Scott*, H Hamilton, London, 1954, p.215

ethos, especially the Anzac 'diggers'.²¹⁵ Gallipoli, after all, was a glorious failure which, because of its timing in the Australian quest for identity, has retained greater prominence in Australian culture than the Charge of the Light Brigade, Trafalgar or any similar event in British.²¹⁶

Surely, though, if Smith was not motivated by the greater good alone, he must have lacked, as his parliamentary detractors seem to suggest, that 'special characteristic of the miner', which

has been his generosity; and in comparison to other forerunners of civilization with their secretive behavior,' the miner was, and is, ever ready to publish his good news to the world. As soon as he has located his claim, he stands on his outcrop and shouts 'Come on, boys!' There is nothing small about him. That is why the miner pre-eminently has been the pioneer of human industry all over the world.²¹⁷

This is the prospector of the hagiographer, sinking under the weight of the 'cult of the explorer'. No prospector in his memoir recounts the exhilaration of abandoning his hard-earned strike to the throng of humanity, while he drifts away onto the high plains tipping his battered stetson to the sun and rain and whistling selections from *Oklahoma* through his teeth. Edward Hargraves shouted his unsecured finds from the rooftops, but out of self-interest since, in the absence of formal mining procedures, he knew that the larger his name was writ in the public debt the larger his reward from the government was likely to be.²¹⁸ James Marshall and his partner in the sawmill tried to suppress the news of the pioneering Californian nugget, but found that quickened pulses made busy lips even then.²¹⁹ Jim McGinty and party hushed up their discovery of Tasmania's

²¹⁵ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, New South Wales, 2000, p.24

²¹⁶ See Bill Gammage, 'Anzac', in (ed. John Carroll), *Intruders in the Bush: the Australian Quest for Identity*, 2nd edn., Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 (originally published 1982), pp.54-66.

²¹⁷ T A Rickard, 'The Status of the Mining Industry', *Engineering and Mining Journal-Press*, vol. 118, no. 9, August 30, 1924, p.334; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.865

²¹⁸ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.17

²¹⁹ Greever, *The Bonanza West*, p.6

biggest gold nugget at the Rocky River.²²⁰ Christopher Thomas Peters and a few confidants dug furiously at the heart of Victoria's Mount Alexander bonanza before word of their good fortune spread.²²¹ No Paddy Hannan, no Charles Rasp, no Arthur Bayley or George Renison Bell walked away from a 'self-made' fortune. Were they deficient in prospector generosity, selfish aberrations who gave the prospector a bad name?

Had Smith stood on his outcrop and shouted 'Come on, boys!' in pre-Mount Bischoff days he would have shifted a nosy currawong and stirred a few dozing possums. Had he shouted it down the main street of Emu Bay, the Leven or Forth, he probably would have been passed off by those unacquainted with him as intoxicated, and perhaps even by some who knew him, so out of character would this behaviour have seemed. Few would have listened; even fewer if the magic word 'gold' failed to materialise; and any stragglers after that would have balked when they realised that they would need to mount an expedition through the 'jungle' in order to visit the source of the dirty rocks which this 'philosopher' brandished.

Things were different in the wake of Mount Bischoff, when 'Philosopher' was a byword for a 'sure thing'. Smith and his associates devised elaborate code messages and procedures to protect mining claims from eavesdropping telegram clerks.²²² The precautions taken by one of his syndicates trapped a nosy prospector for three days in the rainforested Ramsay River gorge.²²³ ('He must have been scared to death,' a delighted Charles Gould crowed to Smith. 'The wonder to my mind is that he ever got out alive.'²²⁴) The 'incarnation of the spirit of all the prospectors of the world'²²⁵ and 'saviour of Tasmania'²²⁶ would no sooner have surrendered an unsecured claim than would any other person who had given his life and energy to a goal, sacrificing worldly goods and pleasures to do so. This is not a defect of generosity. There is no doubt that James Smith was a very generous man, ever sympathetic to human suffering and the

²²⁰ Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast*, p.37

²²¹ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.33

²²² Smith to George Botterill 31 March 1892, NS234/2/16 (AOT); Charles Gould to Smith 30 October 1873, no. 311, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

²²³ Charles Gould to Smith 13 September 1873, no. 263, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

²²⁴ Charles Gould to Smith 20 September 1880, no. 362, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

²²⁵ A Geoffrey Homer, 'Philosopher Smith', *Walkabout* 1 December 1940, p.31

²²⁶ James FitzHenry, 'Vice-Regal Tour', *Tasmanian Mail* 2 April 1887, p.7

amelioration of those in need, and that he held a strong desire to benefit his homeland. Rather than the spruiker described above, he is closer to Wolfgang Paul's definition of the miner as a 'prospector at heart',

always searching, - searching for a better world prompted not just by materialistic motive, but by a *spiritual* ardor and the desire to help his fellowmen [sic]. That certain longing for the unknown and the 'discovery drive,' coupled with imaginative faculties and the spirit of entrepreneur (free enterprise) make him a unique pioneer of civilization at large. Though he may not receive a wreath of laurel from this world, he may experience moments of exhilaration in his digger's life which no king has ever felt.²²⁷

That is, he embodied simultaneously a 'selfish' motive and a 'philanthropic' one, recognising that the same outcome would satisfy both - and that he loved the adventure of exploration. He followed his passion, which brought him spiritual fulfilment, financial security and a more prosperous Tasmania. There is no doubt that Smith wanted money: Gould recalled he and Smith dreaming of being wealthy men over the campfire in the 1860s.²²⁸

George Renison Bell was haloed in similar circumstances to Smith during his battle for recognition as the pioneer discoverer of tin in north-eastern Tasmania:

Mr Bell's unselfishness and disinterestedness is exemplified in the fact that he invited residents of Mathinna...to come and share in his good luck by giving them (modestly) all necessary information, and a warm welcome on arrival.²²⁹

Thomas Bakhap added the philosopher's dreaminess to the mix:

Mr Bell has a perfect genius for mineral discovery...but he lacks the worldly wisdom to make money out of his finds...²³⁰

²²⁷ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.865

²²⁸ Charles Gould to Smith 28 September 1880, no. 362, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

²²⁹ Harry White to ? 3 May 1905 (Bell papers)

²³⁰ 1905 Thomas Bakhap letter; cited by E A Bell, 'George Renison Bell: a Prospector Extraordinary', *Saturday Evening Mercury* 2 March 1974, p.14

Bell's reputation was given an additional sheen of prospector bravado during the north-eastern Tasmanian centenary in the 1970s, to the effect that

Tasmanian mining pioneer George Renison Bell discovered many of the important mining fields on the North-East Coast, but never stayed to develop them.

He always moved on with the prospector's fever after something better - the ever-elusive El Dorado.

But the miners knew that if Renison Bell thought it worthwhile to sink a shaft on a field, there was always payable mineral there.²³¹

It is no disservice to Bell (in fact, probably the reverse, since it credits him with some practicality) to declare this romantic rubbish which would have made the modest Quaker cringe. The first shaft he sank would in most cases have meant nothing more than an attempt to prove the deposit, but even that depended upon the extent of his provisions. This was not 1850s Victoria, a hurly-burly of strike upon strike which sent thousands of diggers careering off across the bush. It was north-eastern Tasmania, which had known only the hint of a rush, and certainly not over tin. *Every move Bell made was determined by money, not by prospector fever.*

Bell, like Smith, has copped the reputational options of mug or martyr. How could a man who walks away from a valuable mineral show (let alone one as valuable as Mount Bischoff) be anything else? Like Smith, Bell was neither. He did not abandon valuable mines out of philanthropy or fervour. His pioneering tin prospecting in the north-east in 1874 was a simple affair consisting of three journeys.²³² During the first, in February 1874, he found what he considered unpayable tin on the east coast, firstly at the Scamander River, then at Georges Bay (near present-day St Helens), although Bell claimed that the latter was subsequently developed as the Anchor tin mine.²³³ In the following month he travelled along the north coast to Boobyalla, where, acting upon the

²³¹ 'A Fever for the Elusive', *Advocate* 4 January 1974

²³² G R B (George Renison Bell), 'Tin Discoveries: Prospecting the North-East: Interesting Historical Sketch', *Examiner* 22 October 1907

²³³ George Renison Bell to E L Hall 6 July 1907 (Bell papers)

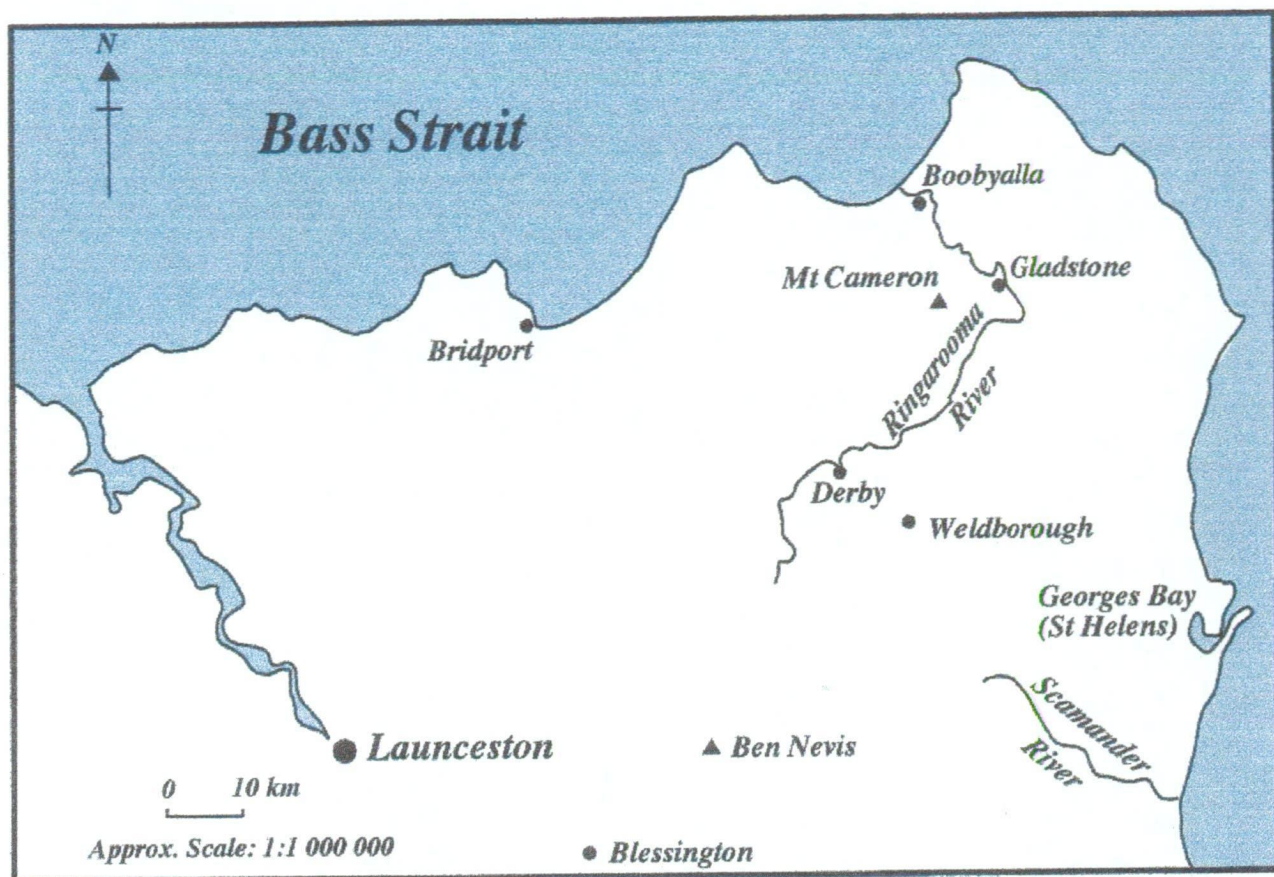


Fig. 9 North Eastern Tasmania



'Little Bell' or 'Pick and Shovel Bell': George Renison Bell. (Archives Office of Tasmania)

advice of a local boy, Archibald Martin,²³⁴ he panned alluvial tin in the Little Boobyalla River (now Bell Creek). Nearby, on what became known as Bells Hill, the prospector found

white rocks like what I had seen on the top of Bischoff. I looked for tin in them, and found it by pulling the moss off. There was one place in the rock - a crack - where I could pull loose lumps of tin out - enough to fill a billy.²³⁵

On return to Launceston he secured backing from investors such as William Ritchie, E D Harrop and Thomas Just which enabled him to take up eight leases in their names at Boobyalla. The final trip was to the Ringarooma River near present-day Derby and Weldborough, during which he discovered more alluvial tin at the Cascade River and on what came to be known as Bells Hill. Before Christmas 1874, he showed samples from this area to the same investors, who declined his offer of a half share for £100. Backing by James Smith, however, allowed Bell to secure two leases at the Cascade River and one at Bells Hill.²³⁶

During the winter of 1874 Bell and William Orr had worked some of the claims at Boobyalla; and later he found a mate, Henry Gill, to help him develop one of the Cascade River sections²³⁷ which was subsequently known as the Star mine. It was impossible, though, to juggle so many investments and to develop so many shows, so Bell did what any prospector would have done. Rather than shouting 'Come on, boys!' down the main street of Mathinna, he sold the Star to Gill and other claims and shows on 'liberal terms', as one of the new owners, 'Land Crab', attests in an 1896 article.²³⁸ These were not new Bischoffs or Dolcoaths, but unproven alluvial tin shows that carried no guarantee of profit. Like Smith, Bell was a generous and self-effacing man who,

²³⁴ In 1907 Martin testified that Bell was the first to discover tin at the Boobyalla River: see Archibald Martin to George Renison Bell 14 March 1907 (Bell papers)

²³⁵ G R B (George Renison Bell), 'Tin Discoveries: Prospecting the North-East: Interesting Historical Sketch', *Examiner* 22 October 1907

²³⁶ *ibid*

²³⁷ *ibid*

²³⁸ Land Crab, 'Pioneer Prospectors of Weldborough and District', *Examiner* 2 May 1896

when he could, rewarded friends who had helped him²³⁹ - but, unlike Smith, nowhere in his papers or any stories written about him is their evidence of a patriotic motive. Few prospectors could afford a romantic philanthropy, and certainly not Bell.

So, returning to the complaints of Lette, Butler and Reibey, it can be seen that it is ludicrous to criticise a prospector for securing his own claim, particularly one like Smith whose discovery filled so many other pockets. Unlike Peter Lette, Smith was not secure in the employment of the government when he made his discovery.

The 'spirit' of prospecting *is*, as Wolfgang Paul suggests, a generous one. A discoverer does not, however, need to forsake all interest in a find in order to benefit mankind. The few who have done so possibly acted out of self-interest rather than beneficence, worrying that the simple bush life they enjoyed would be irrevocably changed by these unanticipated riches. The historian C J Binks recalls former Mount Lyell manager Geoff Hudspeth telling him that some of the west coast diehards would quietly cover up indications of a lode they had found, so that they could stay 'on the wallaby', which makes their 'amelioration' from the public purse, to say the least, complex.²⁴⁰

Civic leader: birth of a public career

When Smith had struck out over Black Bluff on prospecting trips, the last outpost of civilisation he passed was, curiously, that of a tiny Anglo-Indian aristocracy grappling with an abominable road, mighty forests and profiteering locals. Castra really *was* an outpost. In 1867 Colonel Andrew Crawford had obtained a reservation of 50,000 acres there as a retirement community for fellow Anglo-Indian officers and civil servants.²⁴¹

²³⁹ Donald Campbell recalls Bell giving him a set of carved bone chess pieces and a bound volume of Mrs Herman's poems ('The First Discoveries of Tin on the North-East Coast', *Examiner* 8 August 1907, p.3) in gratitude for his help at Boobyalla.

²⁴⁰ personal communication with C J Binks 20 June 2002

²⁴¹ G T Stilwell, 'The Castra Scheme', in (ed. Gillian Winter) *Tasmanian Insights: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stilwell*, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart, 1992, pp.11-30

Despite Crawford's glowing advertisement, most of those who chose to dock their sub-continental careers in salubrious Tasmania clung to the north-western coast in preference to the untamed wilds.

No sooner had Forth's famous native 'son' been enshrined in silver than, by this scheme, it received its most famous adopted 'son', Edward Braddon, the future premier of Tasmania. He was one of four progressives²⁴² who would dominate Tasmanian politics in the last 14 years of the century, before turning his attention to the federal sphere.

Braddon was also the key to the second phase of Smith's career. During the early days of the Mount Bischoff settlement, Smith had demonstrated that, already, he felt that his social elevation obliged him to protect the moral welfare of the working class which he had transcended. Braddon encouraged Smith's entry into public life, at first in the Forth community, later in political lobbying and finally into parliament. Smith recognised Braddon as the parliamentary champion the north-west needed desperately, and would be the 'main instrument'²⁴³ of his election: but he got caught up in the impetus himself.

On arrival in Tasmania in 1878, Braddon could console himself that this tiny backwater within a backwater contained an enclave of his compatriots, and such was his assimilation that he entered the House of Assembly as representative for West Devon after only one year in the colony. Not that it happened overnight. The newcomer could hardly have been more bemused by this provincial society. At first sight, according to Braddon, every other house at Forth seemed to be a church or chapel. In fact, Forth's earnest denizens had five - Episcopalian, Roman Catholic, Independent, Primitive Methodist and Wesleyan.²⁴⁴ Music meant hymns. The slightest profanity caused a scandal. Caution ruled everywhere.

Braddon and Smith, the two biggest fish in this tiny pond, sized up as temperamental opposites, the former 48 years old and still with his greatest achievements ahead of him, the latter three years older and his grandest days past. On first meeting, 'Mr Philosophy Smith' seemed another Forth curiosity, particularly his

²⁴² Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, p.168

²⁴³ Edward Braddon to Smith 12 October 1879, NS234/29 (AOT)

provincial dining habits (tea and raspberry vinegar were *not* appropriate table companions!) 'The Philosopher', Braddon wrote,

is a thinking man and cautious, a man who reads much, but is slow of speech. We sat in that modest banquet-hall with the Philosopher's well-lined book-shelves round us, and I have no doubt his mind was more in those familiar volumes than in any words that passed at his table then.²⁴⁵

The Australian Mining and Prospecting Hall of Fame, opened in Kalgoorlie in 2001, depicts Smith deep in contemplation, surrounded by his books. In the nineteenth century, this kind of iconographic portrait of the explorer ensconced in his study with his books, maps, or even specimens and instruments, was common. There, according to Driver,

knowledge is represented not merely as a matter of exploring the outer world, but rather as the accumulated product of hours of contemplation within the private space of the study, the place where the raw material of nature is imaginatively, but patiently transformed into ideas, theories, arguments.²⁴⁶

'It is in the study,' the wandering German scientist, Alexander von Humboldt, annotated just such a portrait of himself, 'that the scientific mind can finally master the accumulated mass of empirical experience.'²⁴⁷ Braddon was less than over-awed by the Philosopher's contemplative manner, however, finding him

curiously self-absorbed and single-minded...a man of such obstinate honesty that in more civilised countries it would get him into trouble - possibly lodge him in Colney Hatch [a London mental asylum]: a man who, when he discovers a good thing in minerals or what not, does not want to monopolise it, a very uncommon man with a story I fancied, if he would tell it.

²⁴⁴ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter XVII, July 1878, p.59

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.25

²⁴⁶ Driver, *Geography Militant*, p.14

²⁴⁷ Humboldt; cited by Driver, *Geography Militant*, p.15

The future premier soon recognised, however, that the man buried in his books and papers was

the one man hereabouts, whose interest in the country goes to greater lengths than words....the Philosopher stands alone in deeds. He has stocked two of the rivers with English trout, he has given land for public purposes and is ready to give more, and he has opened out for the country those mining interests that must enrich it greatly, and may, as time wears on, make Tasmania a worthy rival of Victoria in wealth.²⁴⁸

This passage echoes Stanley's description of Livingstone a few years earlier:

Dr Livingstone is one of the few men whose words are realities. There is a quiet, curt energy about his statements which irresistibly impresses the hearer with a conviction that he had done what he says, and that he will do it again when occasion offers.²⁴⁹

Braddon did not admire Smith's caution, commenting that 'it is a pity that the Philosopher is so modest and retiring: if he were more pushing the Forth would gain by it'. Within the censorious Forth township itself Smith had already proved charitable and public-spirited, supporting local ministers of religion, church building funds and any other cause he thought worthwhile. The injection of this outsider's enthusiasm, however, seems to have drawn him further into the community. 'It may be presumptuous,' Braddon wrote in 1878,

to think...but I believe it is in me to rouse up the Forth a little, and possibly its neighbourhood. I have already ventilated the idea of an institute that shall be a theatre, concert-hall, lecture-room, etc., as occasion needs and have a library and club attached to it.²⁵⁰

It is surprising that, having been so anxious to set up a mechanics' institute at Waratah, Smith had not done the same in his home town. He and Braddon agreed to

²⁴⁸ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.26

²⁴⁹ Henry M Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1890 (originally published 1872), p.XVII

subscribe £10 each to the project.²⁵¹ A public meeting was called, Braddon laid the foundation stone in November 1879, and the matter was soon accomplished, the town hall giving Forth a civic focus outside the church.²⁵² A collection of books and newspaper and journal subscriptions was established.²⁵³ The hall was critical to the village's social development, hosting everything from travelling entertainments, political rallies, lectures and concerts, meetings of the Forth School Board and the Forth Cricket Club, to drilling of the rifle club and the Congregationalist divine service.

A strong bond seems to have developed between Smith and the Cornishman, Braddon, at an early stage, and they and their families were soon firm friends. The two men became as ubiquitous locally as the 'cabal' of Kayser and Hall reputedly was at Mount Bischoff.²⁵⁴ Braddon encouraged Smith to take on new civic responsibilities that House of Assembly duty in Hobart prevented him (Braddon) doing himself. In 1880 Smith characteristically resigned from the Forth Town Hall committee because the Anglican Reverend J Harris Wills wanted its proposed museum to open on Sundays.²⁵⁵ Braddon implored Smith to reconsider:

You were one of the first promoters of the Hall; you have been one of the most active friends & the effect of your retiring from the institution can only be disastrous to it.²⁵⁶

Either Wills was outvoted or Braddon's plea succeeded, but the hall's survival was tenuous.²⁵⁷ Braddon urged Smith to look after the Devon Agricultural Society Show and encouraged his initiative in establishing the Forth Farmers' Association, which did not flourish.²⁵⁸ Smith had, meanwhile, made another exit, this time from the Forth Working

²⁵⁰ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter X, June 1878, p.30

²⁵¹ Smith diary entry 8 July 1878, NS234/1/1 (AOT)

²⁵² 'Hamilton-on-Forth', *Examiner* 8 May 1879; Smith diary entries 19 November 1879, NS234/1/2 (AOT)

²⁵³ Smith diary entry 12 July 1880, NS234/1/3; 16 June 1883, NS234/1/6; 28 December 1887, NS234/1/10 (AOT)

²⁵⁴ See Your Northern Correspondent (Ben Langford), 'The Romance of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Co', *Mercury* 21 November 1879

²⁵⁵ Smith diary entry 2 June 1880, NS234/1/3 (AOT)

²⁵⁶ Edward Braddon to Smith 2 July 1880, NS234/29 (AOT)

²⁵⁷ Edward Braddon to Smith 17 July 1881, NS234/29 (AOT)

²⁵⁸ See Edward Braddon to Smith 26 March 1883, NS234/29 (AOT); Edward Braddon to Smith 18 October 1881, NS234/29 (AOT); Edward Braddon to Smith 24 July 1885, NS234/29 (AOT); 'Forth', *Devon Herald* 24 July 1885.

Men's Club, after some undisclosed disrespectful conduct by James Onions.²⁵⁹ There is a suggestion that Onions knew Smith from the days of Jonathan Griffiths - which makes it possible that he did the unthinkable, by raising Smith's ex-convict lineage in public.²⁶⁰ The president appears to have returned after the offender's expulsion, however, and in 1885 Smith could be seen leading the club in a parade of friendly societies to the 'demonstration ground', Beecraft's paddock.²⁶¹

Besides fostering the civic spirit of the Forth - and Smith often helped out Alice Braddon on the farm in her husband's absence²⁶² - the Philosopher advised Braddon about civic matters in Forth and Waratah (for example, suitable candidates for a Waratah magistracy²⁶³), and legislation, suggesting, for instance, that defamation should be punishable by imprisonment.²⁶⁴ This probably indicates how strongly Smith resented being falsely represented or having his reputation tarnished, as evidenced by his frequent letters to newspapers correcting reports of what he had said at public meetings.²⁶⁵

Over the last two decades of his life Smith became noted as a persuasive and, when appropriate, a humorous speaker, even reciting Byron at a cake and apron fair.²⁶⁶ He lectured on improved methods of agriculture.²⁶⁷ He also joined and patronised various sporting clubs.²⁶⁸

Smith's earliest and major interest in the local community, however, was in the cure-all of education of children. As a result of their long banishment from universities in England and the state sanction of Anglicanism even in Tasmania, Congregationalists

²⁵⁹ Smith diary entry 5 February 1881, NS234/1/4 (AOT); Forth Working Men's Benefit Society to Smith 5 February 1881, no. 48, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

²⁶⁰ Mary Jane Smith letter 23 April 1907, NS234/5/6 (AOT)

²⁶¹ Smith diary entry 25 November 1885, NS234/1/8 (AOT). For description of the annual demonstration, see Ronald Smith, 'The Story of Forth', pp.11-12, and 'The Forth', *Tasmanian Mail* 18 December 1880.

²⁶² See, for instance, Smith to Edward Braddon 16 October 1879, no. 14; Edward Braddon to Smith 2 February 1880, no. 30, NS234/29 (AOT).

²⁶³ Smith to Edward Braddon 16 August 1882, NS234/29 (AOT)

²⁶⁴ Smith to Edward Braddon 9 August 1881, NS234/29 (AOT)

²⁶⁵ See, for example, James Smith, 'Railway Meeting at Hamilton-on-Forth', *Examiner* 10 November 1883.

²⁶⁶ 'Hamilton-on-Forth', *Examiner* 8 June 1896, p.2

²⁶⁷ 'River Leven', *Examiner* 14 June 1884

²⁶⁸ Andrew Crawford to Smith 19 January 1887, no. 19, NS234/3/15 (AOT); 'Hamilton-on-Forth', *Examiner* 12 October 1880

(as discussed in Chapter 1) advocated a secular education system. The Sabbath school, however, was an important adjunct, since it united religion and education and did more moral good than all other schools, according to Smith, by preventing young men from becoming larrikins.²⁶⁹ Many children learned to read at Sabbath schools. Education, Smith believed, must go before religion in order to 'light the way of understanding'. An ignorant person could only view the principles of Christianity through the medium of his 'dark mind'. When the educated person examined these principles, he allowed them to flow into his soul and

beatify the understanding, exalt the possessor and make him a blessing to society because he will be a man of Truth a man of peace and a man of Right who will endeavour to his utmost to meliorate [sic] mankind.²⁷⁰

Smith had applied to have a public school established at Forth as early as 1861, when the Board of Education lacked the funds to oblige.²⁷¹ Once the school was established, a regular attendance of twenty students was necessary to keep it going. This was not easy to maintain. Some parents were indifferent to their children's education, others were unable or unwilling to pay school fees, or needed or their offspring to labour on the farm.²⁷² Fear of contagious disease and the poor state of the roads also prompted absences.²⁷³ It did not help that the north-west's schools were notoriously bad until at least the beginning of the twentieth century, being characterised by primitive facilities, lack of teaching materials, extreme overcrowding and unsatisfactory, poorly paid teachers.²⁷⁴

Having six children of his own doubtless encouraged his chairmanship of the Forth School Board, other education lectures and Sunday school tea meetings, although three of his children, at least, attended Miss Goldsmith's private school, and second son

²⁶⁹ Smith notes, 'Education', NS234/143 (AOT)

²⁷⁰ *ibid*

²⁷¹ Thomas Stephens to Smith, 29 June 1861, no. 15, NS234/3/1 (AOT)

²⁷² In 1884 George Burk told Smith that he needed both children at home to help him (diary entry 10 October 1884, NS234/1/7 [AOT]).

²⁷³ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, pp.279-80

²⁷⁴ *ibid*, pp.279, 287 and 323

Ronald was educated at the Ulverstone Grammar School.²⁷⁵ Braddon joined Smith on the school board, which oversaw its running, investigated cases of absenteeism and advised the Board of Education about staff and the standard of education.²⁷⁶ The Smiths and the Braddons alternated as hosts of the annual school fete,²⁷⁷ and the Philosopher was called upon regularly to examine the students in reading and writing.²⁷⁸ Given Smith's report that deficiencies existed in reading, penmanship, arithmetic, grammar, geography and history, it is not surprising that a local petition supported by him and Braddon prompted head teacher Gregory's removal.²⁷⁹

Improved infrastructure and the opening up of new agricultural markets ensured a more prosperous north-west in the 1880s. As life generally grew more comfortable, it was only natural that the old pioneers like Smith who had sacrificed much to establish the coastal community should look askance at a new generation who, as they saw it, took the 'good times' for granted and showed little respect for the old values of honest toil and offering a helping hand.²⁸⁰ The courts were mostly occupied passing judgement on drunkards, disturbers of the peace and feuding neighbours.²⁸¹ Smith was far from alone in condemning drunkenness, the degeneration of modern youth and larrikinism. He opposed the extension of hotel opening hours,²⁸² complained that drunken men could lawfully swear on their own property, and recommended soundproofing of cells in which drunkards were detained.²⁸³

The Band of Hope represented the second coming of temperance to the north-west, after the demise of Hainsworth's Mersey Total Abstinence Society in 1862.²⁸⁴ At one of their meetings Smith counterpointed 'racy anecdotes of his youth' with the

²⁷⁵ *Mercury* 15 January 1880; diary entry 15/3/1882, NS234/1/5 (AOT); 'Like Father, Like Son', *Devon News* 24 October 1963

²⁷⁶ Board of Education to Smith 4 June 1883, no. 168, NS234/3/12 (AOT);

²⁷⁷ *Examiner* 21 December 1889; Alice Braddon to Mary Jane Smith 19 April 1894, NS234/29 (AOT)

²⁷⁸ Gregory to Smith 8 December 1885, no. 213, NS234/3/14 (AOT); Roper to Smith 19 December 1887, no. 375, NS234/3/15 (AOT)

²⁷⁹ Smith notes NS234/14/2 (AOT); Ada, 'Notes from the Forth', *Examiner* 17 June 1886

²⁸⁰ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.345

²⁸¹ *ibid*, p.347

²⁸² letter to *Examiner*, 1889, no. 710, NS234/2/14 (AOT)

²⁸³ 'Obsceneness', letter to *Examiner*, October 1882, NS234/2/8 (AOT); see also Philomelus, 'A Cause of Larrikinism', *Examiner* 7 September 1882

²⁸⁴ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, pp.303-4

'tendency to larrikinism' which he believed was gripping the youth of the colony and, more ironically yet, wished he could 'Turn back, turn back, oh Time/Make me a child once again to-night'.²⁸⁵ In 1887 Smith presided at Reverend Fairey's total abstinence lecture;²⁸⁶ in the following year his engraved portrait was to join those of 'other Australian Temperance Reformers' in the memorial volume of the International Temperance Convention.²⁸⁷ Alcohol, he believed, had even played a part in the decline in Tasmanian farming.²⁸⁸ Smith spoke up about moral issues because he believed it was his duty to do so, but without self-righteousness, which he found objectionable.²⁸⁹

As well as being a teetotaler, he was a non-smoker, although, curiously, tobacco is listed among his purchases as late as 1873: perhaps he bought it for Mary.²⁹⁰ In lines written for the *Manuscript Journal of the Forth Mutual Improvement Society*, Smith deplored the waste of £9,000,000 on smoking annually in Great Britain alone that might have established a workers' cooperative, paid off the national debt or fed the poor. 'Self-denial's a glorious thing,' he asserted. His verse confirms that the dangers of smoking were well-known a century before cigarette companies were held to be culpable for lung cancer.²⁹¹

As Smith's reputation grew, so did the demands made upon him. He opened many a church bazaar or charitable function. In 1892 he demonstrated his eloquent oratory style while opening a bazaar in aid of the Ulverstone Town Hall and Library. Noting, in the case of the library, that 'knowledge is power', Smith claimed that 'superior knowledge' with the axe and saw had given the young men of the north-west the edge in a recent competition at Latrobe. Recognition that chopping had also been called Tasmania's 'national game' led him to a patriotic tribute to his homeland:

²⁸⁵ 'Hamilton-on-Forth', *Examiner* 20 October 1883

²⁸⁶ Smith diary entry 26 July 1887, NS234/1/10 (AOT)

²⁸⁷ International Temperance Convention to Smith 16 October 1888, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

²⁸⁸ 'Decline in Farming', letter to the *Examiner* 1887, no. 345, in NS234/2/12 (AOT)

²⁸⁹ Smith diary entry 16 December 1882, NS234/1/5 (AOT)

²⁹⁰ James Smith accounts 25 February 1873, NS234/4/1 (AOT). Mary affirms that he was a non-smoker in her letter to Smith 10 March 1873, no. 123, NS234/3/2 (AOT). William Ritchie may have started Mary's 'habit' by sending her cigarettes and 'fumigating sticks' to combat her asthma (William Ritchie to Smith 28 November 1883, no. 355, NS234/2/9; William Ritchie to Mary Jane Smith 7 November 1888, NS234/5/1 [AOT]).

²⁹¹ poem in Smith's letterbook March? 1895, after no. 409, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

At any rate facility in the use of the axe has been acquired by Tasmanians under the most praiseworthy circumstances; it has been acquired by emulating their parents and others in the endeavour to become the architects of their own fortunes. If one of the hardest kinds of work has been made the 'national game' in Tasmania then the term sleepy hollow should never be applied to this colony. However so far as the North-West is concerned, we know that for pure air, ever flowing rills, rivulets and rivers, for fertile soil that is being more and more reclaimed under difficulties, and for an industrious population this coast is unsurpassed.²⁹²

It is a tribute to the strength of Smith's moral code that a man for so long financially strapped should not covet money once it was available to him. What remained after he had bought and fenced property and stock, he valued for the good it could do and the knowledge it could bring. Financial security allowed Smith the philosopher to fully indulge his curiosity. In middle age he developed a formidable range of studies which made heavy demands on Melbourne's second-hand book dealers and Walch and Birchall's Launceston store alike. His voracious regular reading included the Tasmanian papers plus, for example, *Catholic News*, *Illustrated London News*, *The Queenslander* and *American Agriculturalist*; while his diverse library featured Cooper's *Surgical Dictionary*, *Life of Charlotte Bronte*, *Wit and Wisdom of Benjamin Disraeli*, *Chemistry of the Farm*, *Sacred Poetry of the Seventeenth Century*, *Ancient History of the Jews*, *Rouse's Practical Man*, *Spectrum Analysis*, *The Power of Water*, *Artistic Anatomy*, *Rules of Rhyme*, *Page's Physical Geography* and *Selected Writings of Dickens*.²⁹³ At the time of Smith's death his library was insured for £100.

The application of this knowledge showed that Smith's interest in Tasmanian economic development extended well beyond mineral exploitation to nurturing and cultivating all of the island's natural resources. As discussed previously, he advocated

²⁹² Smith to *Coastal News* 27 October 1892, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

²⁹³ Smith accounts 30 September 1874, October 1874, 31 December 1874 and 30 June 1875, NS234/4/1 (AOT)

timber conservation,²⁹⁴ improved methods of agriculture²⁹⁵ and the establishment of sugar beet as a cash crop, outlining the workings of the industry in America.²⁹⁶ A paper intended for the Royal Society recommended the introduction of angora goats both as a wool producer and an exterminator of blackberries.²⁹⁷

Smith's correspondence with the Victorian government botanist Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller was the key to further experiments with agriculture. Smith and George Anderson experimented with the improvement and cultivation of barren land.²⁹⁸ In the depression years Smith saw these grasses as the key to establishing unemployed men as dairy farmers.²⁹⁹ Smith and Anderson were keen to establish a wattle bark tanning industry and collaborated in the stocking of the north-western rivers with fish.³⁰⁰ The Philosopher liberated salmon or trout fry in the Mersey, Forth and Leven and Gawler Rivers and Claytons Rivulet, as well as far-flung streams such as the Arthur, Whyte, Hellyer and Heazlewood Rivers; Anderson attended to the Black and Duck Rivers in his own district.³⁰¹ In 1884 Smith explored the viability of Thomas Jones's idea of floating a Bass Strait fishing company on the north-west coast,³⁰² and sounded out Edward Braddon about forming a small association to test some 'pearl ground on the

²⁹⁴ 'Timber Conservation', 6 September 1893, no. 611, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

²⁹⁵ 'The Use of Lime, etc, in Agriculture', *Examiner* 24 July 1895, p.3

²⁹⁶ 'Manufacture of Sugar from Beet', *Examiner* 5 March 1892

²⁹⁷ 1889, no. 663 and 669, NS234/2/14 (AOT). There is no acknowledgement of the paper being received in the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*.

²⁹⁸ George Anderson to Smith 17 November 1884, no. 331, NS234/3/13 (AOT)

²⁹⁹ Smith to editor of *Coastal News*, May 1893, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

³⁰⁰ *Cornwall Chronicle* 27 September 1875

³⁰¹ Smith diary entry 28 November 1890, NS234/1/14 (AOT) See also Smith to Philip Seager 18 February 1890, NS234/2/15 (AOT).

³⁰² George Anderson to Smith 26 April 1884, no. 120; Thomas P H Jones to Smith 26 February 1884, no. 66 and 4 April 1884, no. 102, NS234/3/13 (AOT)

coast of another colony'.³⁰³ By that time, the indomitable prospector had become a dogged campaigner.

³⁰³ Smith to Edward Braddon 3 November 1884, NS234/29 (AOT)

Chapter 7: In Aid of the Colony: Investor, Petitioner and Politician

The battle of Bischoff was far from over. Although Smith avoided the Mount for five years, its poisoned atmosphere permeated his business affairs. The isolated community was bitterly divided into 'Kayserite' and 'anti-Kayserite', Cornishman against German, Queen versus Kaiser, as about a dozen small companies gathered 'crumbs' beneath the 'rich man's table'. With Bischoff in his blood, Smith was involved in most of them. More importantly, he focused his need of personal vindication at Mount Bischoff into a general campaign for the adoption of better ore dressing methods in Tasmania, once again balancing a 'selfless' motive with a 'philanthropic' one. This was the first stage in a public career which aimed to bolster Tasmanian prosperity through the mining and agricultural sectors, especially by opening up the north-west and west coasts.

The 'battle of Bischoff' resumed: Smith's campaign for better mining methods

Mud flew at the Mount for seven or eight years after Smith's rift with the Mount Bischoff Company. Although Smith and Kayser probably never traded blows in print, the deposed 'tin king' was an unwitting figurehead for some of the 'anti-Kayserite' faction. (Several anonymous vindications of Kayser's methods were probably written by Kayser himself or someone closely associated with him.) His German chauvinism was anathema to Tasmanians who tried to atone for their convict 'stain' by being 'more British than the British'.¹ Resentment of Kayser's 'iron fist' - his *German* 'iron fist' in a British outpost - cultivated a division which extended beyond mining methods, however. While Kayser

¹ According to *Statistics of Tasmania* (Parliamentary Paper 1/1882), Germans were a tiny minority in Tasmania. In 1881 there were more people of Chinese origin (811) living in Tasmania than of German (782), less than two percent of the island's (presumably non-indigenous) population having been born outside British possessions.

criticised Cornish miners, he was the subject of racial vilification throughout his time at Mount Bischoff. Waratah shopkeeper William King told Smith how he

went to the meeting and told Kayser a great many things he did not like.

I told him we were English men and expect to be treated as such....it was a great blow for Kayser...²

Dr John McCall, later Tasmania's agent-general in London, reportedly told Kayser at a public meeting that he

must not think he is among a lot of communists of Russia, or any other country like it. As we are living in a British colony, for which privilege we should thank God, we are not going to be dictated to by a few led on by a foreigner.³

At a dinner soon after, McCall was reported to have proposed a toast to Queen Victoria, adding, apparently without irony,

Because if there is one place in the world above another where that toast should be well received it is Waratah, where for the present English rule has given place to German.⁴

If only it was that simple. Although staunchly British, Smith was not anti-German. While he counselled Cornish miner James Hancock that 'It will be a great pity if Englishmen at the Mount do not work together to the utmost and assist each other...',⁵ it soon became apparent that the petty jealousies at Mount Bischoff ignored national boundaries. The climate of suspicion made for odd bedfellows. Miner James FitzHenry discovered that a fellow Cornishman was a traitor:

[Dick] Mitchell is one of them...he is a twofaced toady...While I was with him at the 'Catch-em' I often silently assented, and will add reluctantly, to his denunciation of the 'Kayser management' but I was...thunderstruck to hear he should have carried such falsehoods

² William King to Smith 25 March 1881, no. 95, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

³ Waratah, *Examiner* 21 December 1882

⁴ *ibid.* Queen Victoria's mother was Princess Mary Louise Victoria of Saxe-Coburg, a German duchy.

⁵ Smith to James Hancock 21 December 1879, NS234/2/4 (AOT)

daily about me to Kayser for the latter is a gentleman I must never respect...⁶

James Hancock agreed about Mitchell, but believed FitzHenry was also a traitor:

Mitchell is...with Kayser and little Hall all of his time almost and...Mr Johnson as [sic] seen him with little Hall and Fitzhenry [sic] they are never parted scarsely [sic] and he is seen going to Kaysers [sic] house very often...⁷

One Cornish mining manager, A S R Osborne, claimed that Cornishmen, not Kayser, drove him out of Mount Bischoff,⁸ but when an anonymous correspondent attacked Cornish methods at Mount Bischoff Osborne was quick to take offence and blame district surveyor Charles Sprent, who, he claimed, was 'Kaisers [sic] intimate friend' but who 'abominate[d] the Cornish as much as the German.'⁹ The anonymous writer had credited success at Mount Bischoff to German technology and failure to Cornish, mischievously claiming that Stephen Eddy's 'primitive' ore dressing during the Crosby regime had cost £23 per ton.¹⁰

The irony of this jingoism was that, although Smith generally preferred Cornish principles and Kayser was stoically German, they both adopted what they considered the best technology regardless of its provenance, and that all such technology was international anyway. Along with his trusty Phillips and Darlington's *Elements of Metallurgy*, Smith's mining mentor was the same as Kayser's, George Ulrich, a German. The cornerstone of tin ore dressing at the time was the Cornish rotating buddle - as remodelled in Germany and later again in Cornwall!¹¹

Kayser's own ore dressing appliances at the Waratah Falls carried an international flavour, consisting of slight variations on Munday's (Cornish) buddles and Carpenter's (Cornish) jigger, combined with Ulrich's triangular troughs. The buddle and Carpenter's jigger (which had been employed at the Penguin silver mine) had been

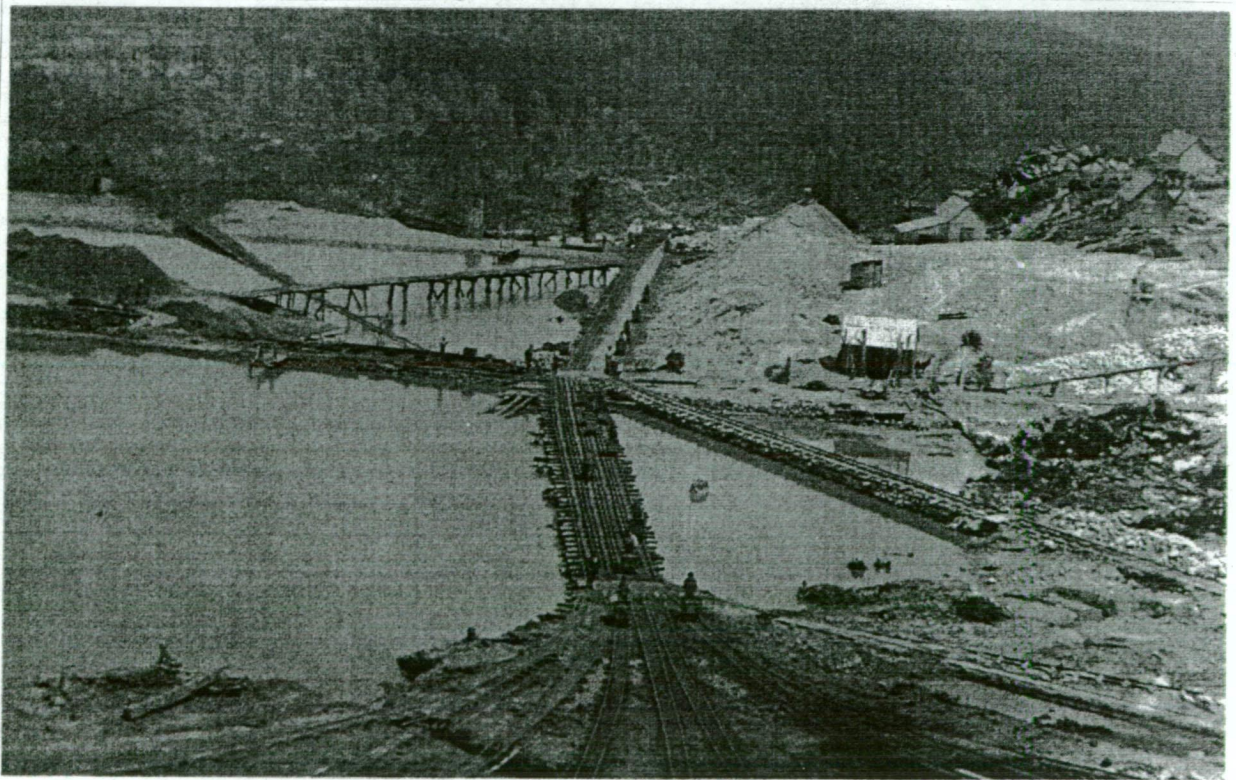
⁶ James FitzHenry to Smith 13 June 1881, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

⁷ James Hancock to Smith 15 June 1881, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

⁸ A S R Osborne to Smith 18 October 1881, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

⁹ A S R Osborne to Smith 30 May 1882, no. 175, NS234/3/11 (AOT)

¹⁰ 'Tin Mining at Mount Bischoff', *The Australasian* 13 May and 20 May 1882



Kayser's laborious quarrying. (Top) Mount Bischoff miners shovel ore into trucks and (Bottom) push them on rails across the shoulder of the mountain to the sluiceways.

patented on the mainland but not in Tasmania. (In 1882 Kayser astonished some of his fellow mining managers by patenting equipment which they believed were already in the public domain in Tasmania.¹²)

The final word on the benefit of cultural cross-pollination belongs to Henry Hancock's successor as general superintendent at Moonta and Wallaroo, his son Henry Lipson Hancock. 'Devon Dumpling' junior, born at Moonta, bred or stage-managed a persona that warmed Cousin Jack's cockles: the accent and social mores, Methodist stewardship and patriarchal command, even the pilgrimage to the land of Trystan and Arthur - which reminded him of 'home', Moonta!¹³ Yet he was 'book learned', a 'meticulous and methodical perfectionist' almost of the German school who bullied his directors into modernisation and expansion.¹⁴ Hancock II was a high achiever who reconciled the utility and *esprit de corps* of mining. Kayser never shucked off his armour long enough to recognise what he might have achieved.

Kayser's denunciation of 'archaic' Cornish methods failed to acknowledge that he ran an expensive, labour-intensive operation at Bischoff. The purpose of 'dressing' ore is to achieve the state of purity required for smelting. Where Smith would have blasted washdirt from the face with the hydraulic hose, washing the already separated matter into sluiceboxes, Kayser instead had men shovel and wheelbarrow the untreated washdirt into trucks which were bowled from the faces along a dizzying criss-cross of tramlines to the sluiceboxes, a slower, more laborious practice. Teams of men bailed water where pumps and horsepower could have been employed. His sluices, according to one observer (admittedly one with a grudge against Kayser), were over-manned and under-watered.¹⁵ Water reserves at the Mount proved inadequate for the task, meaning

¹¹ for example, 'Hear Both Sides' (James Smith), 'Ore Dressing Appliances', *Mercury* 10 March 1892

¹² See Cumberland Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting, *Mercury* 31 August 1882; Ferd Kayser, 'The Cumberland Company and Mr Kayser', *Mercury* 11 September 1882; John S Goodall, 'Mr Kayser and the Cumberland Company' and Miner (A S R Osborne), 'Patent Mining Machinery', both *Mercury* 28 September 1882. Smith also commented upon Kayser's appliances in 'Hear Both Sides', 'Ore Dressing Appliances', *Mercury* 10 March 1892.

¹³ See Philip J Payton, *The Cornish Miner in Australia (Cousin Jack Down Under)*, Dyllansow Truran, Trewelsta, Cornwall, 1984, p.7.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p.203

¹⁵ A S R Osborne to Smith, 6 February 1880, no. 53, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

that frequently in summer the sluices stopped or at least slowed the whole Mount Bischoff Company operation. Perhaps Kayser considered the Mount Bischoff summer too dry for hydraulic sluicing, although the hose was introduced in similar situations at alluvial tin mines in north-eastern Tasmania in the 1880s. This system required a regular water supply and strong water pressure. James Smith believed that Kayser need only enlarge the dams on Mount Bischoff in order to have sufficient water in reserve for the hose.¹⁶ 'I believe,' Smith wrote to his brother,

that the shares would have been up to twenty pounds [they were worth 12 pounds when Smith wrote this letter] long before now if my advice as to hydraulic washing and the proper use of triangular troughs had been taken when I tendered it two years ago.¹⁷

The high-pressure jet of the hydraulic nozzle is the abiding image of the European settlement of north-eastern Tasmania.¹⁸ 'Hydraulicizing' was the key to production at the rich Brothers Home, Pioneer and Briseis tin mines.¹⁹ Extensive storage dams (14 people were killed during the 1929 floods when the Briseis mine's storage dam burst, sending a 30-metre wall of mud and water into the town of Derby²⁰) and water-races, with the addition of diesel or electric pumps to increase the water pressure (a system often called 'gravel pumping'), maintained the nozzle's supremacy well into the twentieth

¹⁶ Smith notes NS234/14/5 (AOT)

¹⁷ Smith to John Smith 18 January 1878, NS234/2/4 (AOT)

¹⁸ For an overview of the early years of north-eastern mining, see Mark Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast of Tasmania from 1876 to 1913*, *Examiner*, Launceston, 1915?, pp.46-80; and 'The Tin Deposits', *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, vol. 1, Maitland and Krone, Hobart, 1900, pp.502-5. For individual areas, see Tasmanian Department of Mines reports: W H Twelvetrees, *The Gladstone Mineral District*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 25, Hobart, 1916; P B Nye, *The Sub-Basaltic Tin Deposits of the Ringarooma Valley*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 35, Hobart, 1924; and A McIntosh Reid and Q J Henderson, *Blue Tier Tin Field*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 38, Hobart, 1928.

¹⁹ M R McKeown, 'Sluicing for Tin at the Briseis', *Chemical Engineering and Mining Review*, 11 July 1938, pp.385-91; H H Dunkin, 'Sluicing Operations at Briseis Consolidated N L', *Chemical Engineering and Mining Review*, 10 July, pp.351-62, and 10 August 1946, pp.391-400; A D Knighton, 'Tin Mining and Sediment Supply to the Ringarooma River, Tasmania, 1875-1979', *Australian Geographical Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, April 1987, pp.83-97

²⁰ G and S Miller, *Of Rascals and Rusty Relics: an Introduction to North-Eastern Tasmania*, O B M, Hobart, 1979, p.53

century, unchallenged even by the more modern but capital-intensive technique of dredging.²¹

Mount Bischoff had a higher rainfall than the north-eastern tin region where hydraulic sluicing was employed: in 1884 Mount Bischoff had 90.40 inches of rain compared to 61.65 at Goulds Country in the north-east.²² Kayser was said to expect 85 inches of rain per year²³ - an extravagance compared to the 33 with which the Vegetable Creek alluvial tin miners made do in New South Wales, using dams, sluiceboxes and W H Wesley's ingenious tin-saving machine.²⁴

Every year seemed to serve Kayser a new crisis. After the dramas of Smith's resignation and the teamsters²⁵ and mine workers²⁶ strikes in 1876, Kayser had shareholders howling in the following year for stockpiling ore at the mine while the market price of tin plummeted.²⁷ In 1878 there was a general strike at the mine in favour of the eight-hour day, which the directors eventually granted.²⁸ Kayser was unperturbed by all this fuss, assuring the board about the mine:

He [Kayser] was at present only scratching - not mining in the proper sense of the term - but dealing rather with wash-dirt. He was getting ready for greater things. No one present was young enough to see the end of it...²⁹

²¹ Knighton, 'Tin Mining and Sediment Supply', p.85

²² According to Dunkin, 'Sluicing Operations at Briseis Consolidated NL', *Chemical Engineering and Mining Review*, 10 August 1946, p.397, from 1900 to 1935 Derby, site of the Briseis hydraulic sluicing operation, averaged 50.19 inches of rain per year.

²³ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.204

²⁴ *Statistics of Tasmania 1885*, Parliamentary Paper 1/1885; T W Edgeworth David, *Geology of the Vegetable Creek Tin-Mining Field, New England District, New South Wales*, New South Wales Department of Mines, Sydney, 1887, pp. 6 and 19

²⁵ See letters written by James Patterson to Smith in January and February 1876, NS234/3/5, and Smith to J W Norton Smith 26 February 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT).

²⁶ See William Dell, 'The Mount Bischoff Strike', *Cornwall Chronicle* 10 July 1876; William Ritchie to Smith 19 June 1876, no. 185 (NS234/3/5 [AOT]), and meeting of directors 15 June 1876, NS911/3 (AOT).

²⁷ Ferd Kayser, 'Mount Bischoff', *Proceedings of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science*, no. IV, 1892, p.346

²⁸ meeting of directors 23 and 25 May 1878, Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, NS911/3 (AOT); 'The Mount Bischoff Strike', *Examiner* 25 August 1878

²⁹ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting July 1878, *Examiner* 1 August 1878

The Smith pension debate in 1879 was the signal for a public outpouring about Smith's 'selfless' benefit to Tasmania - and a stick for disgruntled Mount Bischoff Company shareholders and Smith allies to beat Kayser with. The climate of indignation encouraged a band of disgruntled shareholders to try to depose the mining manager, who was accused of squandering money and general incompetence. The report by J W Reeve claimed that the workers, Hall and Kayser especially, were overpaid; the dams and dressing sheds were unsafe; the new iron tramway being laid and the locomotive ordered to run on it were a waste of money; and the smelters were expensive, inefficient and should have been built at Emu Bay. Reeve also criticised the stoppage for lack of water, which he said could be avoided if all washing of ore was done at the falls.³⁰ His report was thrown out at the company's half yearly meeting in Launceston, however.³¹ The directors rallied around Kayser, finally quashing what they painted as a Hobart heresy, but not before many a stinging exchange had hummed along the telegraph wires between the 'northern' and 'southern' capitals.

Smith's notes files contain hundreds of pages about his rift with the Mount Bischoff Company and Ferd Kayser's management. They appear at first to be drafts of painstakingly crafted letters to newspaper editors. Some are - but many pages represent letters that were never published and presumably never submitted to a newspaper. In August 1876 Smith read a Mount Bischoff column in the *Mercury* which claimed that Kayser had effected great improvements in the dressing sheds and in water storage, and that a 'systematic principle' had been introduced at the faces where previously disorder had reigned.³² The newspaper editor, Smith told Crosby, had offered him right of reply. 'I have been writing a great deal for the Mercury but after all I have met with what will enable me to say sufficient is a comparatively short letter,' he wrote early in October.³³ Then, two days later: 'I have written a volume on the Mount and now I shall

³⁰ Reeve's report 22 March 1879 no. 114B, NS234/3/8 (AOT). The *Mercury* and the *Examiner* contain much bitter debate about the operation of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company in 1878 and 1879.

³¹ James Agnew to James Smith 30 March 1879 no. 114C, NS234/3/8 (AOT). For details of the meeting that quashed the rebellion see *Examiner* 4 and 5 August 1879 and 5 September 1879.

³² 'Mount Bischoff', *Mercury* 29 August 1876

³³ Smith to W M Crosby 2 October 1876, no. 238, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

have to condense.’³⁴ Smith was a ponderous writer, incapable of firing off the sharp retort which would have been most effective in this situation. He cannot have believed, surely, that the 32-page response posted to the *Mercury* in January 1877 would ever appear in print.³⁵ After this, he made no further attempt to publicly vindicate himself. He would never publish a letter under his own name which discussed his split with the company or Kayser’s management.

That is not to say that he did not write one. In 1878 Thomas Hainsworth, under the pseudonym of ‘Watchman’, wrote several letters to the *Examiner* criticising Smith’s treatment by his homeland and also Kayser’s management.³⁶ In his mine manager’s defence, William Ritchie claimed that

if the directors had allowed themselves to be guided by the suggestions which Mr Kayser made shortly after he took charge, for the erection of crushing and dressing machinery, the Company would have been paying dividends at a much earlier period; and I believe that my co-directors are of the same opinion...³⁷

While this statement was designed to vindicate Kayser, it also damned Smith, who had moved the resolution against Kayser’s steam-powered crusher. Smith’s notes contain drafts of a reply to Ritchie’s letter addressed to the *Examiner*. ‘I consider the assertion [Ritchie’s] particularly directed at myself’, he wrote, ‘and I have therefore no objection to discuss the matter with Mr Ritchie...’³⁸ No discussion took place, however, because the reply was never posted. Clearly Smith stewed over the wrong he felt had been done to him, but never publicly, relying on others like Hainsworth to do the talking for him. At this time (September 1878) Smith was in regular contact with William Ritchie over mining business, and neither in their correspondence alluded to what to Smith must have seemed a public slight. Smith’s blunt honesty suggests that he would not quail at a

³⁴ Smith to W M Crosby 4 October 1876, no. 236, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

³⁵ Smith to W M Crosby 25 January 1877, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

³⁶ ‘Watchman’ (Thomas Hainsworth), ‘Mount Bischoff and its Discoverer’, *Examiner* 2 September 1878; ‘Mount Bischoff Company and its Management’, *Examiner* 17 September 1878; ‘Management of Mount Bischoff Mine’, *Examiner* 24 October 1878

³⁷ William Ritchie, ‘The Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company’, *Examiner* 3 September 1878

³⁸ Smith notes, ‘Early Mining at Mount Bischoff’, NS234/14/3 (AOT)

confrontation. He had withdrawn from the Mount Bischoff Company; he probably considered that that action spoke for him, and that to enter into an argument would be to dignify actions and words unworthy of dignity. By not responding he retained the moral high ground.

Reeve's report must have been music to Smith's ears. A significant group of shareholders who, like him, were appalled by Kayser's 'extravagance', preferring cautious progress, challenged the company management. Reeve's criticism of the laborious trucking of ore to sluiceboxes at the Mount must have been especially gratifying. Smith entered into the debate, but his criticism of the mining operation was indirect, anonymous and never personal, coming in the form of support for Reeve's suggested improvements.³⁹ Smith was a stickler for doing things the right way, while privately he expressed astonishment at the complacency of the Launceston shareholders who stood by Kayser:

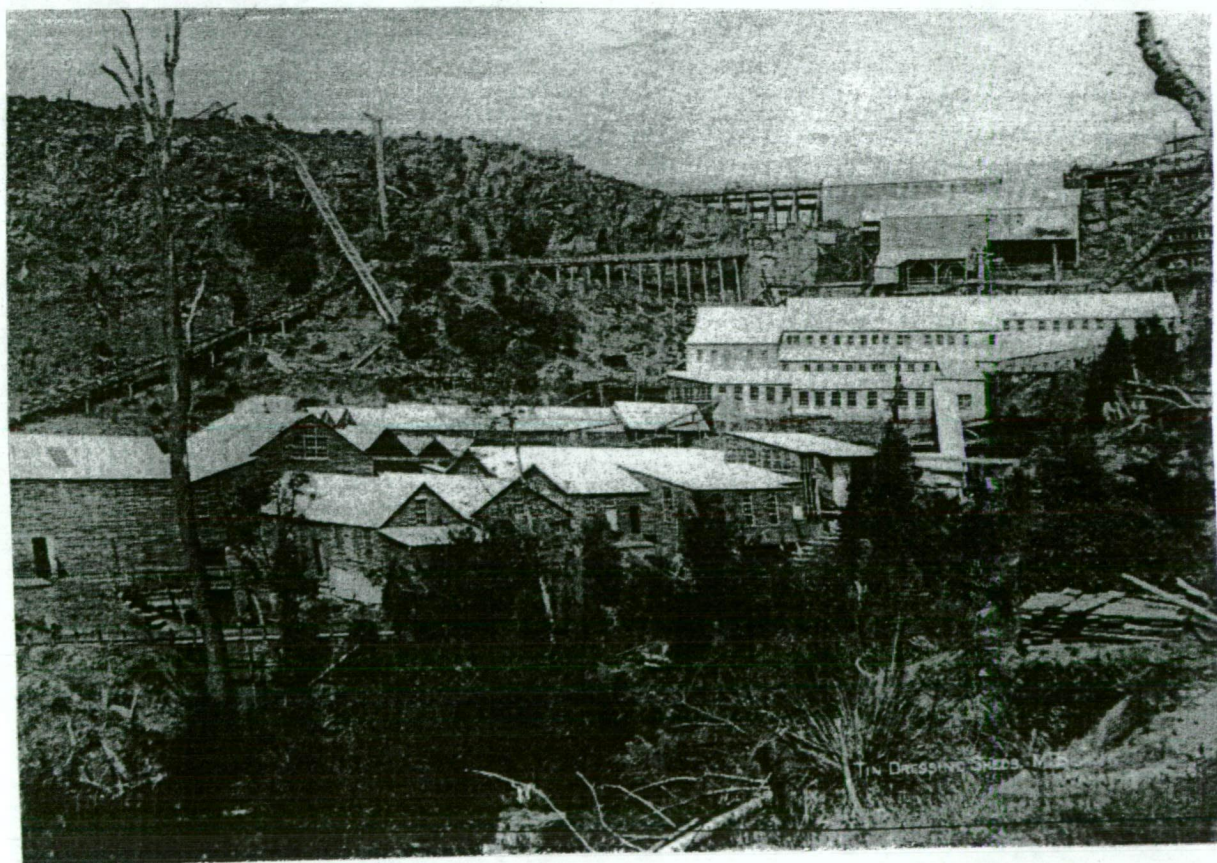
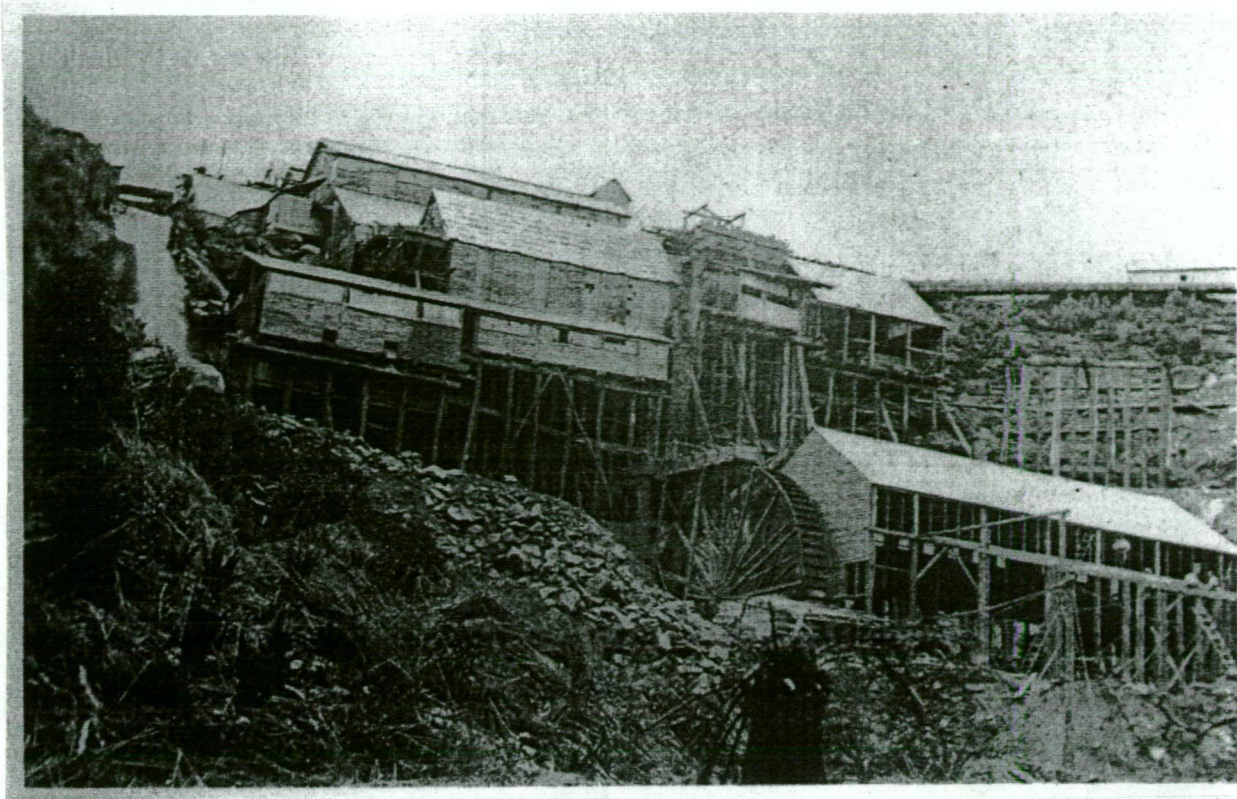
What they believe to be a large monthly yield of ore, like that of last month, seems always to put them in good humor. They never care to inquire how it is that the manager has been so far out in his calculations as to storing water on the Mount for the dry season.⁴⁰

At the time of Reeve's report, perhaps the bleakest of his management, Kayser considered resigning. He wrote, 'It will not take long for me to clear out as I am beginning to get thoroughly tired of working for men who don't know when a man has done his duty...'⁴¹ That he was rattled by the experience and by his detractors at Mount Bischoff is borne out by an incident in May 1879. A Hobart detective was despatched to Waratah and Emu Bay to investigate Kayser's claim that tin ore was being stolen in transit between these centres, thereby reducing his production figures. Kayser's evidence for the claim was that he had found empty ore bags. The explanation the detective got at Emu Bay was that some bags burst during the journey and were

³⁹ See Smith's (A Northern Shareholder's) letters to the *Mercury* 2 May 1879 and 28 May 1879.

⁴⁰ Smith to J W Norton Smith 13 May 1879, NS234/2/5 (AOT)

⁴¹ letter after Henry Ritchie to James Agnew 4 April 1879, NS234/3/8 (AOT)



(Top) The original Mount Bischoff mill on the Waratah Falls, with Kayser's 'Queen of the Mount' battery below. Note the enormous waterwheel which drove the machinery.

(Bottom) Kayser's dressing sheds below the Waratah Falls.

discarded, ore being transferred to new bags. The detective gave a hearty laugh and declared this the most pointless errand of his career before setting off home to Hobart.⁴²

By that time even the mining manager's pride and joy, the dressing sheds, were under attack. Crouched in the valley below them, a team of 'shearers' was sieving ore from his used water. Four 'ovine' brothers, the locally named 'Shave 'em' (Bischoff Alluvial Company), the 'Catch 'em By the Wool' (East Bischoff Company), the 'Shear 'em' (Mount Bischoff Tin Streaming Company) and the 'Hold 'em' (Phoenix) dredged the river below the Mount Bischoff Company dressing sheds. After originally reworking the Mount Bischoff Company sluiceway tailings delivered to it by a creek which bisected both properties, the Waratah Alluvial also switched to the river. Ironically, in the next decade when Smith was selling almost the last of his Mount Bischoff Company shares, he continued to pocket dividends from the company's ore as dredged by this 'shearer'. In a twelve-month period ending in 1887 the Waratah Alluvial reportedly caught £2,000-worth of ore. (After deriding such operations, the Mount Bischoff Company erected its own 'Ringtail' treatment plant on the river, later joined by its own 'Catch 'em' plant. From 1883 to 1891 the Ringtail sheds retrieved 1,116 tons of tin oxide by treating the company's own tailings. In fairness to Kayser, however, Crosby and Eddy's improvised dressing appliances deposited the first tailings in the Waratah River before he took over the mining management.)

The East Bischoff operation used the horse-powered ore dressing machine patented by Cornishman W H Wesley to sift the tailings. Smith recognised its efficiency. Such an appliance, he believed, would be particularly beneficial to small operations working low-grade ore. Since the Wesley machine did not require a flow of high pressure water, it was even preferable to the hydraulic hose. In an anonymous letter to the *Mercury* during the 1879 crisis he recommended it to replace Kayser's elaborate sluicing works:

By substituting a Wesley machine, with the five men and boys and two or three horses requisite for working it, and removing the large quantity of refuse that would result from its operation; replacing large number of

⁴² James Patterson to Smith 22 May 1879, no. 158, NS234/3/8 (AOT)

'sluices', there would be an immense saving in expense, as a large number of men could then be sent from the discarded sluices to other work...⁴³

'I am doing all I can to bring the machine into notice in this colony...', Smith had told its inventor a few months earlier.⁴⁴ He kept up the pressure on Kayser and the Mount Bischoff Company. 'The East Bischoff Company should be well satisfied', he told the *Mercury's* readers,

with the 64.4 per cent yield of their ore, considering the position of the Wesley-machine down the river. Ore with most earthy matter adhering is as a rule borne farthest down the stream. There is purer ore up the river from where the machine is placed....If it has paid the Mount Bischoff Company within the last year to send quantities of 55 per cent ore to their smelting works, there need be no doubt that 64 per cent ore will pay particularly if smelted at the Mount.⁴⁵

Smith greeted the arrival of Wesley as mining manager of the West Bischoff company with great satisfaction, declaring,

He seems just the kind of practical man in connection with his profession that I have long wished to see in Tasmania with full scope for the display of his ability. His system of ore dressing does away with the expensive 'sluice' to which egotistical ignorance has so long clung in this colony.⁴⁶

Smith had found his new Crosby, a skilled mining manager of modest tone and practical (Cornish) methods. Ironically this *anti-Kayser* or Kayser usurper was another Ulrich protege. Wesley and his machine became the focal point of opposition to Kayser, and, as the clouds gathered, the 'King of the Waratah' began to peer over his shoulder. In May 1879 he telegraphed to the directors,

⁴³ 'Mount Bischoff', *Mercury* 24 May 1879

⁴⁴ Smith to W H Wesley, 27 January 1879, NS234/2/5 (AOT)

⁴⁵ 'Ore-Dressing at Mount Bischoff', *Mercury* 27 May 1879

⁴⁶ Smith to A A Butler, 12 November 1878, no. 474, NS234/2/4. For Wesley's background see 'Tasmania and its Mineral Wealth', *Australian Mining Standard*, 1 July 1898, pp.47-8.

Waratah [Alluvial] clear up tailings sent down in Crosby's time.

East Bischoff has hardly got two tons of very inferior ore for the whole time at work. Wesley's patent jigger is a big humbug....⁴⁷

Kayser need not have worried about his critics. After surviving the early crises his management was never again seriously questioned by directors or a significant group of shareholders. The reason for this was simple. By 1880 shares that had at one time been worth less than £3 each were fetching £50. Kayser had opened up the heart of the Mount Bischoff tin mine, the Brown Face, which Smith had discovered but a failed steam engine and finally ill-health had kept from Crosby.⁴⁸ 'This change came very suddenly...', Kayser wrote,

and from that time a great portion of my troubles ended...as my opponents, who continuously criticised and condemned my works felt themselves beaten...⁴⁹

Things do not look so cheery in retrospect. Wellington confirms what Smith implied, that

no matter how inefficiently the mine was run the extraordinary richness of the Mount Bischoff ore body would allow a substantial profit to be made.⁵⁰

There was no argument against profits, however.⁵¹ The 1880s were a time of tremendous prosperity for the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, as the market price improved and the Brown Face seemed exhaustible. Before the end of the decade it would chalk up its first million in dividends, only the second Australian base-metal mine (after South Australia's Wallaroo and Moonta Mining and Smelting Company) to achieve this.⁵²

⁴⁷ Meeting of directors May 15 1879, Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company minute books, NS911/1 (AOT)

⁴⁸ Smith to J W Norton Smith, 2 December 1878, NS234/2/4 (AOT)

⁴⁹ Kayser, 'Mount Bischoff', p.347

⁵⁰ H K Wellington, in Groves, D I; Martin, E L; Murchie, H; Wellington, H K, *A Century of Tin Mining at Mount Bischoff, 1871-1971*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 54, Hobart, 1972, p.72

⁵¹ *ibid*, p.93

⁵² Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.247



Mineralised water leaks from an adit at the base of the White Face, Mount Bischoff.

The advent of the Emu Bay Railway in 1884 was also a boon to the company, reducing the cost of carting ore to £3 per ton, compared to £5 per ton on the tramway.⁵³ Few questioned Kayser's methods at this time; so long as profits were being produced it was assumed he was doing his job. This was borne out by a nervous confession about Kayser made by company manager Henry Ritchie when the share price dipped temporarily to £48 in 1884:

At one time I would not have given him [Kayser] a moment's thought but now it is different; as the washdirt is not near so rich and he has none of the rich reserve to fall back upon to make up a deficiency...⁵⁴

While this proved to be a false alarm (some old tailings had merely got mixed in with Brown Face dirt),⁵⁵ it is nevertheless a very illuminating quote, since it shows the company's negligent attitude to keeping rich ore in reserve. Little thought was given to mixing rich ore with poorer stuff in order to ensure the mine's longevity: the rich ore was torn out and sent to market. As Wellington has pointed out, it was Mount Bischoff Company policy to pay as dividends almost all the profits made as they were made.⁵⁶ Little money was set aside for exploration work, metallurgical development or maintenance work to ensure the mine continued efficiently into the future,⁵⁷ and the annual summer standstill and the loss of ore from the company's appliances were ignored. In 1883 the Mount Bischoff Company plant became the first industrial plant in the Australian colonies to be lit by hydro-electricity,⁵⁸ and by the middle of the decade Kayser was the toast of the directors.⁵⁹

Kayser had won the battle of Mount Bischoff - but whether superior methods had prevailed is hard to determine. Smith's hydraulic hose (or Wesley's machines) would

⁵³ Ferd Kayser and Richard Provis, 'Mount Bischoff Tin Mine, Tasmania', *Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, vol. CXXIII, no. 1, 1895-6, p.377. Kayser goes on to claim mischievously that in the days of the bullock teams the ore cost from £24 to £30 per ton to cart; in a letter to L H Noyes, Smith puts the figure at £11 10 shillings per ton (Smith to L H Noyes 21 April 1879, NS234/2/5 [AOT]).

⁵⁴ Henry Ritchie to Smith, 4 July 1884, no. 193A, NS234/2/10 (AOT)

⁵⁵ January 1885 half yearly meeting of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, *Tasmanian Mail* 2 February 1885

⁵⁶ H K Wellington, in D I Groves et al, *A Century of Tin Mining*, p.92

⁵⁷ *ibid*

⁵⁸ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.204

probably have made Mount Bischoff production more efficient and saved money, but had Smith got his way and - minus Kayser - stayed on as a director, the mine's mechanisation and general progress would probably have been slower and less successful. Had Kayser been sacked and Crosby reinstated - or Crosby and Hall run the show together - outside help (a consultant) would have been needed to mechanise the mine. What would the future have been after that? Kayser had the necessary skills. He deserves credit for his drive, which overcame great difficulties and produced great profits, and for the technical expertise which built the 40-head Queen of the Mount battery.

Beyond that it is not easy to find a yardstick by which to measure Kayser's performance. While many people recorded accounts of their visits to the Mount Bischoff mine, few of them were mining 'experts'. Even fewer were disinterested and well-informed. In 1891, for example, a 'well-known mining expert', P E Henderson, declared Kayser 'the best manager you [Tasmanians] have got,' but this judgement appears to have been made after spending only a few days in the colony.⁶⁰ The Tasmanian Department of Mines was established in 1883, but it paid little attention to Mount Bischoff in its early days. The so-called 'mountain of tin' must have seemed like the one fixture in Tasmanian mining at a time when new fields were developing in the west.

Comparisons between Mount Bischoff and other mines are difficult to draw due to the unusual character of its mineral deposits, which included both 'stockworks' (which could mostly be worked from the surface) and underground lodes. Kayser and his supporters unrealistically compared Mount Bischoff production costs to those of the Cornish tin mines. There was no comparison. Barton explains not only that the Cornish tin industry was then centuries beyond its heyday, but that it was always largely unprofitable, with a few very rich exceptions such as the Dolcoath and the St Ives Consols mines. Cornish methods were simple and cheap out of necessity, since the ore was comparatively poor and would not have paid otherwise. Apart from a short

⁵⁹ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting July 1885, *Examiner* 1 August 1885

⁶⁰ 'Technical Resources: Opinions of an Expert', *Examiner* 22 October 1891

'bonanza' in the early 1870s, according to Barton, the nineteenth century was a disastrous time for the Cornish tin industry.⁶¹

After 1872 it was decimated by competitors. By the middle of 1873, even before Mount Bischoff began large-scale production, the glut of Australian tin in London caused the price of black tin to plummet - £30 per ton being lost between January and March 1874 alone.⁶² A long succession of Cornish tin mines closed - and the news only grew worse. Mount Bischoff now entered the picture with reports of an inexhaustible supply. Dividends paid by Cornish mines in 1874 (£49,121) amounted to barely one-fifth of the 1872 figure.⁶³ Of the 230 mines operating in Cornwall and Devon in 1873, only 98 remained four years later.⁶⁴ The economic difficulties were compounded by the wet winter of 1876-77. Men were laid off by mines which could not pump water out fast enough to keep working levels operable.⁶⁵ The Cornish tin workforce halved in five years.⁶⁶ Investors panicked and, as with the 1860s copper slump, Cousin Jacks and Jennies decamped for the new world, especially the South African diamond mines, skimming off the most skilled workers in the Cornish industry.⁶⁷

Only the Dolcoath approached Mount Bischoff for richness, and it was a mine of a totally different character. Like almost all Cornish tin mines, its deposits were underground lodes. It was nonsense to compare the production costs of a largely alluvial mine with excellent natural facilities for ore dressing and crushing, to one with far more extensive underground workings which used steam instead of water power - all of which inflated costs.⁶⁸ Underground workings meant pumping engines, steam haulage of ore, often from great depth, to the mill and almost perpetual timbering and maintenance as the diggings were extended. (Henderson was abruptly reminded of these realities after he compared the Mount Bischoff management favourably to that of

⁶¹ D B Barton, *A History of Tin Mining and Smelting in Cornwall*, D Bradford Barton Ltd, Truro, 1970, p.13

⁶² *ibid*, p.158

⁶³ *ibid*, p.164

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.169

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p.170

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p.175

⁶⁷ *ibid*, pp.169 and 173

⁶⁸ See, for example, 'Mechanical Appliances for Dressing Ores', by Porphyry, *Mercury* 21 June 1881. This letter was a response to a Smith letter of the same title.

the Tasmania gold mine at Beaconsfield.⁶⁹) Not only that, but underground workings were perilous to both human and financial well-being. Workers constantly in fear of their lives, as the Dolcoath crew must have been after a succession of underground collapses, did not give their all. In September 1893, when that mine was working a rich lode, a fall of earth killed eight men. More than a century of burrowing had de-stabilised thousands of cubic metres of ground. A further fall three months later buried the richest section of the mine, sending the Dolcoath on a downward financial spiral from which it would not recover.⁷⁰ Although there were landslips on Mount Bischoff's Brown face, they were never of such significance or the subject of such fear.⁷¹

To further complicate the matter, wages were much lower in Cornwall than in Tasmania. It is important to bear in mind also that cheap management is not necessarily advantageous to the mine, especially, as was the case in Kayser's later years, when it means failure to explore the mine's potential.

Another comparison of efficiency which Kayser drew between Mount Bischoff and one of the Cornish tin mines was in his favourite area of ore dressing. In 1881 the Dolcoath employed 500 people, more than the entire Mount Bischoff workforce, at its battery and dressing sheds alone, producing 150 tons of clean ore per month. At Mount Bischoff 40 dressing shed personnel produced 233 tons per month. While these figures suggest that Kayser's operation was far more efficient, they do not, as the miner Peter Matthews pointed out, take into account the comparative purity of the ore.⁷² It should also be borne in mind that the number of personnel required varied according to the richness of the ore.⁷³

Several Cornish 'captains' were reported to have deferred to Kayser's superior know-how.⁷⁴ One was Charles Thomas, formerly mining manager of the Don Tin Mining

⁶⁹ 'One of the Captains', 'Mr Henderson Interviewed', *Examiner* 25 October 1891

⁷⁰ Barton, *A History of Tin Mining*, pp.212-13

⁷¹ H Murchie, in D I Groves et al, *A Century of Tin Mining*, pp.46 and 47; Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting July 1898, *Examiner* July 30 1898

⁷² See Peter Matthews to Smith 8 August 1894, no. 215, NS234/3/22 (AOT).

⁷³ The Dolcoath figures were quoted by Kayser from the *Mining Journal* 19 November 1881 at the January 1882 half yearly meeting of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company (*Examiner* 2 February 1882). These were quoted again along with Mount Bischoff Company figures in 'Tin Mining at Mount Bischoff', *The Australasian* 13 May 1882.

⁷⁴ See 'Porphyry', 'Mechanical Appliances for Dressing Ores', *Mercury* 21 June 1881

Company at Mount Bischoff, who returned to Waratah in 1886 after a six-year absence. The surreal quality of the newspaper account of his lecture makes its veracity doubtful. Perhaps Thomas needed a job or a reference, because he reportedly praised Kayser with a degree of sycophancy usually reserved for 'confessed' counter-revolutionaries in a Stalinist show trial:

There was one here who had far outstripped the old world system. He [Thomas] referred to Mr H W F Kayser...who deserved all the very greatest thanks and gratitude for his mode of dressing and general management. He would even say now that had the appliances which he (the speaker) would have introduced been used the place would have been ruined. He paid a high tribute to the energy and splendid genius of Mr Kayser, who had merited the thanks of every man in Tasmania, and whom he designated one of the best mining engineers in the world.⁷⁵

Kayser's machinery

deserved the thanks of the world. He [Thomas] referred then to the great Dolcoath mine in Cornwall...which possessed something like 170 miles of tunnels, and referred to the vast differences between the modes and conditions there and here. Here the system was direct from the face to the battery and Mr Kayser could afford to pay workmen higher wages....Mr Kayser...had the best appliances the world has ever seen.⁷⁶

Actually the system at Mount Bischoff had never been direct from the face to the battery, and would not be until the sluicboxes were discarded when the alluvial wash was virtually exhausted in 1893.⁷⁷ Curiously, the speaker (or, perhaps, the correspondent, or both) seems almost to credit Kayser for having more accessible lodes than those buried hundreds of metres underground at the Dolcoath. Smith may have comforted himself with James Hancock's assertion in 1880 that Charles Thomas would

⁷⁵ 'Tin Mining - Old and New', *Examiner* 22 December 1886

⁷⁶ *ibid*

⁷⁷ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting January 1894, *Examiner* 1 February 1894

be a good judge of a vat of beer, since he then spent three-quarters of his time as mining manager in the pub.⁷⁸ As other Cousin Jacks, Dick Mitchell and John Stanton, are trotted out to participate in the Cornish breast-beating, one can almost imagine an audience terrified by the realisation that someone has to be the first to stop applauding, and black marios sidling up to the rear exit. Perhaps the Mount Bischoff 'cabal' was as stifling as its critics made it out to be.⁷⁹ Stanton, 'while willing to accord all credit to Mr. Kayser', admitted that

it was a little humiliating that after his [Stanton's] country had been engaged in the production of tin for a thousand years they should have been so badly beaten in the mode of dressing.⁸⁰

At the Mount Bischoff's Company's half yearly meeting in July 1894 Kayser alluded to

the working and results of the best mine in Cornwall, and quoted figures to show that if the same amount of ore had been produced from Mount Bischoff as that company for the last 12 months the dividend paid by the Mount Bischoff Company would have been double that paid by the Cornwall Company.....

Again, this is an unrealistic comparison in the name of self-glorification, but if it was worth saying once, it was worth saying again:

The Cornwall mine he had alluded to could not approach the Mount Bischoff Company as far as profits were concerned by at least 50 per cent....The improved mining machinery at Mount Bischoff had reduced the working expenses so that the crushing and dressing did not cost more than 1s [shilling] per ton.⁸¹

In 1890 one Robert D Holroyd, whose qualifications are unknown, declared the Mount Bischoff Company plant

⁷⁸ James Hancock to Smith 11 June 1880, no. 212, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

⁷⁹ See Your Northern Correspondent (Ben Langford), 'The Romance of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Co', *Mercury* 21 November 1879

⁸⁰ Your Northern Correspondent

⁸¹ 'Mining Meetings: Mount Bischoff T M Company', *Examiner* 1 August 1894, p.8

the largest erected on any mine in Australia, and for economy and effectiveness, so far as the dressing and saving portion is concerned, is admittedly superior to any as yet employed in the tin workings of the Old World, the Dolcoath not excepted.⁸²

Exactly who was 'admitting' this is not clear, and Holroyd undermines his argument by praising Kayser's Ringtail and Catch 'Em plants (and deriding their predecessors) which sieved out escapees from this apparently superior dressing and ore saving.⁸³ None of these claims about Kayser's status as an ore dresser contains conclusive evidence.

A miner named Peter Matthews, who claimed to have four or five years' acquaintance with the Mount Bischoff mine and 15 years with Cornish mines, dismissed any comparison between the two. 'All due respect to Mr Kayser,' he wrote,

for his successful development of this mountain of tin, but he should be modest enough to allow the Cornish managers credit for what they deserve. Personally I do not think the Mount Bischoff management can in any department of mining give a lesson to the Cornish managers...In no point you can mention is there any analogy between the mines. Not even in the dressing department Mr Kayser's strongest points....The Cornish mines may never be able to approach the world famous Mount Bischoff mine in the matter of dividends but for sound practical and economical mining in every department they can still give not only to Mr Kayser and the Bischoff Company but to the whole of the Tasmanian community a sound and profitable lesson.⁸⁴

The Kayser sophistry of comparing two different types of mine could just as easily have been turned on its head a few years later. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Anchor mine - far closer to home, at Lottah, in the Tasmanian north-east - produced

⁸² Robert D Holroyd, 'Mount Bischoff and its Tin Deposits'. This story probably appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1890 (it quotes Mount Bischoff production figures as at June 30 1890), of which no complete set has survived. It can be found in G J Burke (compiler), 'Newspaper cuttings dating from 1879-1920...', held by the National Library, Canberra.

⁸³ See also Wellington, in D I Groves et al, *A Century of Tin Mining*, p.92.

⁸⁴ Peter Matthews to Smith 8 August 1894, no. 215, NS234/3/22 (AOT)

tin ore at about half the cost Kayser did at Mount Bischoff.⁸⁵ Why could Kayser not match this performance? One reason was that most of the great surface deposits at Mount Bischoff were now exhausted, making him more reliant upon underground mining which inflated his production costs, whereas the Anchor was an open-cut quarry which trucked ore straight to water-driven crushers. The Anchor tin was produced cheaply (Donald Clark called it 'about the cheapest mining, milling, and concentration in Australia'⁸⁶) because it *had* to be: the ore had a much lower tin content than that of Mount Bischoff.

Local conditions make one-to-one comparisons between mines very difficult. Perhaps, in its heyday, Mount Bischoff might have borne some sort of comparison with a large, rich alluvial mine. The biggest alluvial fields in the world were in Malaya (now Malaysia), which even by the 1880s dwarfed Australian tin production; by 1895 it produced more than half the world's tin ore.⁸⁷ It is doubtful that Kayser would have succeeded had he accepted the Malayan management position which he declined in favour of Mount Bischoff in 1875, because while small Chinese enterprises at first thrived in Malaya, until the 1890s western tin companies generally failed. Their inflexible organisation, complicated mining techniques, expensive management and high wages were unsuited to working the then prevalent small alluvial deposits, which could peter out without warning.⁸⁸ In 1900 western companies accounted for only 10 percent of Malayan tin production.⁸⁹

It was when the shallow patches were exhausted that the technological expertise of western companies brought them into their own. By 1910 their share of the Malayan

⁸⁵ According to Donald Clark, *Australian Mining and Metallurgy*, Critchley Parker, Melbourne, 1904, p.206, in 1901 a ton of Mount Bischoff ore cost 5 shillings 4.928 pence to produce; whereas for the Anchor, under mine manager Lindesay C Clark, he gives a figure of less than 2 shillings 9 pence (p.218). For a detailed table of production costs at the Anchor see Sydney Fawns, *Tin Deposits of the World*, 2nd edn., The Mining Journal, London, 1907, p.106. Mark Ireland (*Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast*, p.75), writing a few years later, claims that under the management of James Lewis the Anchor produced ore at 3 shillings 6 pence per ton.

⁸⁶ Clark, *Australian Mining and Metallurgy*, p.218

⁸⁷ Wong Lin Ken, *The Malayan Tin Industry to 1914*, University of Arizona Press, Tuscon, 1965, p.53

⁸⁸ Yip Yat Hoong, *The Development of the Tin Mining Industry of Malaya*, University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1969, p.104

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p.125

tin market had jumped to 22 percent. Hydraulic sluicing, introduced to Malaya only in 1892, was a far cheaper method of breaking down large alluvial tin deposits than the traditional Chinese method of open-cast mining.⁹⁰ In 1906 hydraulicing was superseded by gravel pumping, which even as late as the 1960s, when it was very old technology, accounted for 40 percent of Malayan tin production.⁹¹ While gravel pumping was four or five times as expensive as hydraulicing, it was much more widely applicable in the flat terrain of the Malayan tin fields and required little capital outlay.⁹² This may have been Mount Bischoff's future mode of operation - in different hands, at least.

Joining the directors in bluffing shareholder confidence appears to have been part of Kayser's job. Bruiting the mine had never been on Smith's agenda, however. The Brown Face, he warned, would not last for ever.⁹³ While the Mount Bischoff Company operations must have now seemed a lost cause to Smith, he maintained his campaign against the sluice until its abolition in 1893, when that company's management was clearly hiding the truth about the mine's decline from its shareholders.

Overcoming the prejudices in force at Mount Bischoff, still the hub of Tasmanian mining activity, proved very difficult. In late 1879 Smith unwittingly damaged his own cause in trying to help out an out-of-work American journalist, Ben Langford. After securing him an assignment filing a series of reports on the north-west for the *Tasmanian Mail*, Smith decided to 'kill' the proverbial 'two birds' by packing Langford off to Mount Bischoff to air the 'truth' about W H Wesley. This was a big mistake. Langford exceeded his brief by launching a scurrilous attack on 'the Kaiser':

The state of society at the Mount is described as a 'Reign of Terror.'

You can scarcely sneeze without being 'run in' by the company. Mr Kayser is the Kaiser; the Cesar; the 'autocrat of the breakfast table,' the dinner table, the tea table, and the supper table! You daren't take a walk without his permission...I think the best thing the inhabitants could

⁹⁰ *ibid*, pp.130-1

⁹¹ *ibid*, p.18

⁹² *ibid*, p.131

⁹³ letter sent to the *Mercury* dated by Smith 26 January 1881, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

do would be to hold a meeting in order to propose a 'declaration of independence....'⁹⁴

This in turn launched the career of the equally venomous 'Waratah' in defence of Kayser, setting back Smith's cause by reinforcing the German-Cornish antagonism.⁹⁵ The departure of Wesley and other Smith allies from the stifling confines of Mount Bischoff and the closure of most of the 'crumbing' companies left Kayser's methods virtually unchallenged so long as the Brown Face held out.

Smith rebuffed William Ritchie's and Charles Sprent's⁹⁶ efforts to reconcile him with Kayser and the Mount Bischoff Company. A trip to Mount Bischoff, Ritchie told him, 'would do you a great deal more good than fossilizing [possibly a deliberate pun on the explorer's traditional 'philosophising' in his study or on Smith's nickname] yourself in that precious laboratory among your beloved specimens.'⁹⁷ Sprent wanted Smith and Crosby to come to Waratah for a concert, assuring the former that

David Jones goes up to sing so if you come you will be amongst old friends and we three can contemplate the place where we had rough times, jolly company and good spirits. Please don't think I am interfering where I have no business, it is one of the most earnest wishes I have ever formed, to get you back to Bischoff and taking an interest in its progress.

Sprent, whom Osborne later denounced as a Kayser ally, longed to quell the bitterness at the Mount. He had berated Kayser about his attitude to Cornishmen, in reply to which, Sprent wrote tantalisingly, the mine manager 'put before me letters the perusal of which would disgust you. I only wonder he has kept them back. If ever true story of Bischoff is told you will be astonished at it.'⁹⁸ In declining the invitation Smith

⁹⁴ Your Northern Correspondent (Ben Langford), 'The Romance of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Co', *Mercury* 21 November 1879

⁹⁵ 'Waratah', 'Mount Bischoff', *Mercury* 12 December 1879 and others, including 'Waratah and Whyte River', *Examiner* 17 January 1891

⁹⁶ Charles Sprent to Smith 29 December 1879, no. 428, NS234/3/8 (AOT)

⁹⁷ William Ritchie to Smith 9 February 1880, no. 56, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

⁹⁸ Charles Sprent to Smith 2 December 1879, no. 393, NS234/3/8 (AOT)

suggested that he too had 'inside knowledge': 'I am convinced I could tell you a good deal that you do not know.'⁹⁹

In 1880 Kayser himself extended the olive branch to his estranged 'ex-employer'. In a letter to Smith enclosing a mineral sample, the mining manager recalled the pleasure of their early acquaintance and attributed the later ill-feeling to a misunderstanding. He wished, he wrote, Smith would visit the Mount as he had in the 'old days' and

try to forget the past and the by gone, and I have no doubt our reconciliation will be hailed with pleasure by all our so many friends'.¹⁰⁰

Smith's reply to Ferd Kayser was cooler than a Mount Bischoff summer:

Sir,

Your letter of the 14th instant is received and contents noted. I

thank you for the specimen.

Yours truly

James Smith.¹⁰¹

No further correspondence passed between them.

'Unlocking' the north-west

Tasmanian prospecting had changed in the wake of Mount Bischoff. Lone, unaided explorers like Smith had become more the exception than the rule. The 'mountain of tin' had induced investors to pour money into the stormy ranges and matted thickets of the west. The preliminary work was done for them by the 'visionary',¹⁰² Wynyard-based government surveyor, Charles Sprent, whose 1876 expedition south-west from Mount Ramsay cleaved open the lower Pieman River, the Meredith Ranges and Mount

⁹⁹ Smith to Charles Sprent 6 December 1879, NS234/2/5 (AOT)

¹⁰⁰ Ferd Kayser to Smith 14 January 1880, no. 13, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

¹⁰¹ Smith to Ferd Kayser 22 January 1880, NS234/2/5 (AOT)

¹⁰² C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, p.207

Heemskirk.¹⁰³ By the following summer the first prospecting parties had clawed their way in.¹⁰⁴ George and Owen Meredith represented the Emu Bay and Pieman River Prospecting Association; Charles Donnelly led the five-man Hobart-based Great Western Prospecting Association; and up the Derwent Valley and over the ranges came T B and John Moore and James Andrew, joined by the explorer James Reid Scott and party.¹⁰⁵ By the end of the 1877/78 summer nearly a hundred men worked the field between Macquarie Harbour and the Pieman.¹⁰⁶ From North Heemskirk tin the focus shifted to Pieman and King River gold.

Having been the inspiration for much of this activity, Smith was now not only one of its backers, a prospector by proxy, but a petitioner for further development. The diversity of the prospecting schemes James Smith had invested in over two decades reflected his connections throughout the colony, the passion he retained for the task and his strong belief in Tasmanian minerals. Charles Gould, whom Smith had joined as a shareholder in the Tasmanian Mineral Exploration Company, introduced him to two Hobart-based Mount Ramsay prospecting associations. The discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff led Gould to target Mount Ramsay as a probable granite outcrop of the same ilk. Gould's regular assistant Fred Heazlewood, who knew the area from cutting the Burgess track in 1864, and Rocky Cape's Joseph Harman, already a veteran of gold searches from Victoria to the Arthur and Pieman Rivers, found copper near the mountain, but it was their later discovery of bismuth that streaked this first Bischoff satellite across the heavens, William Ritchie bruited it richer than the mountain of tin itself.¹⁰⁷ Smith also sent Joseph Harman and Walter Wellard out prospecting the north-west coast for one of the Mount Ramsay syndicates.

As discussed earlier, sometimes a mineral claim invoked great secrecy: Smith protected what was his. Working on tin near Smith's old discovery at the Hampshire

¹⁰³ *ibid*, pp.203-207

¹⁰⁴ C J Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1988, pp.11-16

¹⁰⁵ See Neil Smith, 'James Reid Scott (1839-77)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, Melbourne University Press, 1976, pp.96-7.

¹⁰⁶ Binks, *Pioneers*, p.17

Hills, George Botterill was ordered to telegram 'Shall go on a journey' for the discovery of a little tin; 'Shall go on a long journey' as an indication the ground was worth taking up; while 'Shall not go on a journey' was bad news indeed.¹⁰⁸ Mount Ramsay commanded even greater caution. To minimise 'leaks', messages about mineral finds here were to be telegraphed not from the north-west coast or Launceston, but only from Deloraine to Hobart. The initial telegram should request the presence of one of the shareholders in the Hobart telegraph office. Only when this man had arrived were details of the valuable land to be transmitted, whereupon by further telegrams the discoverer would be instructed to make his way to the capital for discussion.¹⁰⁹ Such was the veil drawn over Mount Ramsay ('To prevent any one else from following us we did not mark the new track for about one hundred yards from the turn off....'¹¹⁰) that the prospector S H Wintle, in trying to follow Gould to the claim, was lost for three days in the Ramsay River gorge.¹¹¹ In February 1875 a sick-looking Wintle was reported to have left camp at Mount Bischoff for his western claim. The alarm was raised three days later, after his terrier returned alone, the suggestion being made that this 'faithful and inseparable companion' would not have abandoned his master while he (Wintle) lived.¹¹² The flustered prospector denied ever being lost when he arrived in Launceston a few days later.¹¹³ Attempts to float a Mount Ramsay bismuth company failed and the mine was forgotten, but the track cut from Bischoff beyond Ramsay helped forge the southward push.¹¹⁴

Few had it tougher in the bush than this new wave of prospectors. Stocky, strong as an ox and equipped with internal radar, Frank Long was built to beaver his way through the west.¹¹⁵ Five feet eight inches tall, 12 stone, fair and freckled, this native of

¹⁰⁷ William Ritchie to H Bland, Van Diemen's Land Company 10 July 1875, VDL24 (AOT). See also Thomas Just, 'Tasmania and its Resources: Bismuth', *Cornwall Chronicle* 1 August 1875, p.3.

¹⁰⁸ Smith to George Botterill 31 March 1892, NS234/2/16 (AOT)

¹⁰⁹ Charles Gould to Smith 30 October 1873, no. 311, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

¹¹⁰ Charles Gould to Smith 13 September 1873, no. 263, NS234/3/2 (AOT)

¹¹¹ Charles Gould to Smith 20 September 1880, no. 362, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

¹¹² 'Mr S H Wintle', *Cornwall Chronicle* 26 February 1875

¹¹³ 'Mr S H Wintle', *Cornwall Chronicle* 1 March 1875

¹¹⁴ Joseph Harman to Smith 8 June 1892, no. 163, NS234/3/20 (AOT)

¹¹⁵ See 'T P H J', 'The West Coast: a Prospecting Team, 1876-1896', *Tasmanian Mail* 28 March 1896, p.35; and Wilberton Tilley, *The Wild West of Tasmania: Being a*

Perth, Scotland had been raised at Campbell Town and as a youth sought gold in Victoria and New Zealand. From about 1876 he devoted himself to work as a prospector, guide and pathfinder, and there was none hardier. While Long and Harman were testing the Meredith Ranges and Mount Heemskirk, W R Bell finished Smith's exploration of the north-west for Burnie associations which joined Smith with Robert Quiggin, James Patterson and J W Norton Smith, who had earlier sent out the Meredith brothers.¹¹⁶ Bell worked for or with Smith for more than two decades, being his firmest ally in his later years. For some time he interspersed prospecting at the Hampshire Hills and Mount Bischoff with expeditions as far afield as Ringarooma, the Pieman, the Meredith Ranges and Montagu and Robbins Islands.

Smith's discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff had interrupted his exploration of the Arthur River from its source to the sea. In 1872 Robert Quiggin and Charles Sprent had traversed the Arthur from its junction with the Hellyer River upstream to Mount Bischoff. In February 1878 Bell and Thomas Raymond completed the work by boating the lower Arthur out to the Southern Ocean, much of the river banks being too steep to prospect on foot.¹¹⁷ From 1879 Bell alternated between Bischoff and a claim at the 'Little Mount' (Highwood Hill) near St Valentines Peak which he worked for the usual investors. Although Bell is best remembered for uncapping the Magnet and Heazlewood silver-lead lodes, Norton Smith and the Van Diemen's Land Company were much more interested in his silver show on its land on the upper Emu River, upon which they lavished funds prematurely in hope of joining the mineral boom.¹¹⁸

Smith also sent W M Crosby out prospecting the Meredith Ranges, Mount Heemskirk, the Rocky River and the Pieman in 1882 and 1883,¹¹⁹ and later helped finance S B Emmett's new tin discoveries in the Norfolk Ranges which eventually led to the opening up of the Balfour copper field. 'You once advised me to persevere,' Emmett

Description of the Silver Fields of Zeehan and Dundas, Zeehan, Evershed Brothers, 1891, p.12.

¹¹⁶ Con Curtin, 'Old Times: Early Prospectors and Pioneers', *Examiner* 26 November 1927

¹¹⁷ James Fenton, 'Pioneer Work in Devon: XXXIV: Exploration', *North-West Post* 17 February 1891

¹¹⁸ Smith to W R Bell 16 July 1875, no. 340, NS234/2/2 (AOT)

exhorted Smith, 'so lend a helping hand...'¹²⁰ Smith did, presumably with some trepidation.¹²¹ Called in by Emmett's Prospecting Association as presiding expert, Smith reported that Emmett's ground was not payable, but he recommended further prospecting of the area. Three Mount Bischoff ventures, including the short-lived North Bischoff Valley Company and Mount Bischoff Silver Lead Mining Company, resulted from prospecting associations in which Smith was involved. The third, the Waratah Alluvial Company, paid dividends into the 1890s as a continuing embarrassment to Ferd Kayser.

While the government had refused to help in opening up Mount Bischoff, the brilliant success of that mine was not lost on it. The establishment of a mining administration separate from the Department of Lands and Works was a gradual process. The appointment of the first commissioner of gold fields and commissioner of mines, Bernard Shaw, in 1876, foreshadowed reform of the mining laws. Minister for Lands and Works in the Giblin government, Christopher O'Reilly, especially supported the extension of roads in remote areas and exploration to uncover mineral resources.¹²² The increasing need for a professional geologist in Tasmania (Melbourne-based George Ulrich had already served several Tasmanian mines) led to the appointment of Gustav Thureau to report on metalliferous deposits in 1881. In the following year he was made inspector of mines, adding to his earlier brief administration of the *Regulation of Mines Act* (1881), which ensured the safety of mines and miners.¹²³

O'Reilly's successor Nicholas Brown faced a barrage of demands for railway construction and mining development.¹²⁴ Some of the most ardent petitioners were in the north-west. James Smith, making an almost seamless transition from miner to company director to lobbyist, determined to address his old prospecting bugbear of want

¹¹⁹ W M Crosby to Smith 13 December 1882, no. 440; 27 December 1882, no. 448 (both NS234/3/11 [AOT]); and 18 January 1883, no. 21 (NS234/3/12 [AOT]) etc

¹²⁰ S B Emmett to Smith, 11 September 1884, no. 257, NS234/3/13 (AOT)

¹²¹ Smith to S B Emmett 16 September 1884, NS234/2/10 (AOT)

¹²² W A Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood: 1803-1945*, St David's Park, Hobart, 1991, p.166

¹²³ Glyn Roberts, *The Role of Government in the Development of the Tasmanian Metal Mining Industry: 1803-1883*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 1999, pp.110-121

¹²⁴ Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, p.167

of infrastructure. Now he pushed back the frontiers with the petition and the soapbox rather than with his old companions the axe and the machete, as president of the North-West Coast Railway and Public Works League (NWCPRWL). This was the logical extension of the public spirit and sense of justice which had been evident since his days on the Anti-Gold-Licence Committee at Bendigo.

Until the 1870s the north-western yeomanry had taken little interest in Tasmanian politics. In the 1860s, according to Stokes,

political activity in the North-West...was confined to brief, often poorly-supported election campaigns and occasional displays of more general interest when a financial measure particularly concerning the district was before parliament.¹²⁵

The coast's Legislative Council member in the years 1869-70, Alexander Clerke, told a Forth public meeting which supported annexation by Victoria in 1872 that

The people were doing now what they ought to have done long ago, namely, taking an interest in politics; though a great amount of pressure was required to overcome their apathy. He could tell the meeting that the people themselves were to blame for a good deal of the expenditure that had taken place. When he was member for Meander, fighting their battles by opposing the Main Line of Railway on the floor of the Upper Chamber, he never received a petition or remonstrance of any kind from his constituents against that work; consequently he felt he was without support, and therefore Ministers concluded that the country was favorable to the project.¹²⁶

This apathy was due in part to the restricted franchise. In 1870 only 803 of the 4,467 males (and no females) aged 20 or more in the electorate of Devon, which spanned from Badger Head to Cape Grim, were eligible to vote in the House of Assembly.¹²⁷ *The north-west was too poor to vote.* Candidates and the delegations who

¹²⁵ H J W Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910: the Establishment of an Agricultural Community*, Ph D thesis, Australian National University, 1969, p.170

¹²⁶ 'The Crisis - Public Meeting at the Forth', *Examiner* 13 August 1872, p.3

¹²⁷ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.171

supported them were gentlemen. James Gibson, local agent for the Van Diemen's Land Company, had been succeeded as member for Devon by William Archer and then by an emancipist's son, John Davies, both absentee members who would hardly be expected to understand or fairly represent the needs of long-suffering north-western peasant farmers. The electoral reform of 1871 which increased coastal representation to three House of Assembly seats (East Devon, West Devon and Wellington), retained one Legislative Council seat (Mersey), and eased the House of Assembly franchise, gave impetus to growing demands for public works. In that year 200 local ratepayers gathered at Torquay to demand the building of bridges at Torquay, Latrobe and the Don under the *Local Public Works Act*.¹²⁸ In 1873 the Devon Political Association met at Forth to protest that north-westerners were 'subjected to an unfair share of taxation for the construction and maintenance of the Main Line road; the Main Line Railway; the Main Line of Telegraph; the Launceston and Deloraine Railway; and Telegraph line, and other expensive operations from which they received no direct benefit...'¹²⁹ The first true north-west representatives were elected to parliament in time for excited debate over railways, the wisdom of Tasmanian annexation by Victoria,¹³⁰ and the push for expenditure on north-western roads, bridges, railways and harbours, the platform of the NWC RPWL. In 1879 the north-west had four capable members: the former government surveyor, James Dooley (East Devon); Edward Braddon (West Devon); the former and future premier, W R Giblin (Wellington); and William Moore in the Legislative Council seat of Mersey. Surely now the coast would be opened up.

'Give us a road!' the birth wail of the north-west, had deepened in its adolescence. In 1879 the traveller could train from Hobart to Deloraine but disappear in a boghole if he ventured further onto the (north-western) coast road. Braddon had noted the coasters' plight upon arrival:

I am suffering some little anxiety at present for my fate next week, when

I am to try to cross by road from the Mersey to the Forth...We are to be

taken across by a cart, *if* the cart can be got over; but sympathising

¹²⁸ 'Torquay: Important Meeting of Ratepayers', *Examiner* 24 August 1871

¹²⁹ 'Devon Political Association', *Examiner* 19 June 1873, p.3

friends shake their heads when they speak of that journey, and no one has yet found the proper words for describing the autumn condition of that 10 mile tract...¹³¹

The complaints echoed loudest in Waratah, which felt hoodwinked by the Van Diemen's Land Company and the government. That company's new wooden, horse-drawn tramway from Emu Bay to Rouse's camp four kilometres south-east of Mount Bischoff was described as a rabbit hutch on wheels which would be condemned by the RSPCA.¹³² This was not an objection to the behaviour of the driver, Leech, who, removed from whipping distance of the leading nag in the troika, kept a supply of stones which he lobbed at this animal to urge it to greater effort: 'Gee up, you hoss there!' No, it referred to the spine-breaking experience of sitting on cushionless boxes shored up by sharp diagonal bars and apparently designed to seat the anorexic.¹³³

The tram consisted of three compartments containing three, six and three seats respectively, separated by a wall high enough to ensure that only human heads impeded the draft shooting through the vehicle. The roof and canvas side flaps remained weatherproof so long as the weather behaved. Only a dirty rope lashed breast-high across the back prevented those in the rear compartment being pitched out onto the tracks at any eager response to Leech's volleys.

Eight hours of shivering passed in this 'missing link' between the stage coach and the train - with neither the room of the first nor the speed and comfort of the latter - lodged the traveller at a siding dubbed by some optimist Pleasant Banks (Rouse's camp),¹³⁴ where he was merely passed from one 'ogre' to the next, from the 'Demon's Co' tram to the Mount Bischoff Company's. Here two shillings won him possession of a straw-filled sack on a dirty, open tramcar, from the back of which a driver with the aspect of a lighthousekeeper lashed the poor beast leading the way through the 'Bischoff mist'.

¹³⁰ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.177

¹³¹ Edward Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies: Letters to India from North-West Tasmania* (ed. Scott Bennett), Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1980, letter IV, May 1878, p.12

¹³² 'Sicnarf Gnik', 'Mount Bischoff Tramway', *Examiner* 11 September 1879

¹³³ Your Northern Correspondent (Ben Langford), 'The Romance of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Co', *Mercury* 21 November 1879

¹³⁴ F E M, 'A Forest Picnic in Tasmania', *Examiner* 16 March 1878

The NWCRPWL was formed in 1879 as one of many responses to the Van Diemen's Land Company's imaginative conveyance. It is probably no coincidence that the league was formed at Forth at Smith's initiation a few months after the election of Edward Braddon, who beat Smith's ex-farm manager John Chaffey. Barely 300 ballots were cast. Smith had canvassed throughout the electorate on Braddon's behalf and taken an active role at his rallies. The election must have given Braddon an insight into the class system of his adopted homeland. The Anglo-Indian seemed to have glimpsed a democratic paradise when he visited Smith's property for the first time, commenting about the small farmers and workers,

They address you as fellow-men, yet presume in no way. They are free men...class is respected without the bitterness of class-feeling; and it is not the way of the herd, or hind, to think one man as good as another or better. Happy Tasmania!'¹³⁵

On first meeting Chaffey had impressed Braddon as

A noble specimen of the Tasmanian born...a well-grown man of 6 feet 2, broad of chest and narrow in flank, fresh coloured and hale and strong.

An active man of much experience and once a cockatoo-farmer.¹³⁶

Come election time, however, Chaffey, with a degree from the 'University of Mobopolis',¹³⁷ was chided for his lack of education and working class background, whereas Braddon, who had social standing, money and administrative experience, only had to counter his opponent's claim that he had been a slavedriver in India.¹³⁸ There was little to choose between their platforms: both focused on roads, railways and customs reform.¹³⁹ Social superiority aside, Braddon's independent status was probably the vote-winner: the north-west demanded a warrior, not a conscript who would kowtow like Chaffey to Reibey's opposition faction.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.27

¹³⁶ *ibid*, letter IX, June 1878, p.28

¹³⁷ 'Sic Nos Non Nobis', letter to *Devon Herald* 30 July 1879

¹³⁸ 'Election Meetings in West Devon', *Devon Herald* 30 July 1879

¹³⁹ *leader*, *Devon Herald* 19 July 1879

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*

Braddon became the NWCRPWL's man in parliament, presenting their petitions and fighting their battles. The league's main aim was to extend a railway line along the north-west coast and south to Bischoff as a means of opening up the vast mineral and agricultural resources presumed to be lying dormant there. Re-establishment of the old firm of Smith (president) and Crosby (treasurer) signalled the prevalence of Mount Bischoff in the campaign. Smith was a powerful figurehead with a persuasive mythology. He endowed the cause with the 'indomitable pluck' of the 'saviour of Tasmania'.¹⁴¹ No one knew better than him the potential of the unopened country or the sacrifices that might be obviated by the provision of infrastructure. He had, after all, suffered from its absence:

I was not a little surprised to hear him [Smith] state that he had to sell his own property in order to bear the expense of opening a road to Mount Bischoff, because even after his discovery of the tin it was useless applying to the Government for help. I do not think a parallel can be found in history equal to the difficulties in opening this mine, the steady perseverance of its discoverer, and the great success of his enterprise.¹⁴²

Smith and Braddon remained close allies in the fight for infrastructure. Smith was far from impressed with the Crowther government's allocation of funds for roads in West Devon early in Braddon's first term. His characteristic vehemence recalls the indomitability of the prospector who had scoured the highlands in the face of public apathy:

The amounts set down...are to say the least insignificant considering the important resources that can only be developed by means of roads. And to think of occupying two years in expending £120,000 on reproductive works in a colony the importance of whose resources is attracting the notice of the world and whose vital interests are languishing for want of such works. But I am afraid that there are those

¹⁴¹ *Examiner* 3 November 1883

¹⁴² 'A Visit to Castra', *Examiner* 26 July 1880

in all parts of the colony who would not go Twenty [sic] yards from a beaten track to enquire into such. I have met with people incredulous and inert in this way who have been most obstinate in opposing outlay in reproductive works and I have no doubt that the opinions of such people have influenced more or less those of the present [premier?] and other Ministers.

What a pity that with the rich public estate Tasmania possesses there should be dread of increasing her public debt in a commensurate degree.¹⁴³

If Smith or Braddon had expected to find unity among the north-western members, however, they were sorely disappointed. Neighbouring constituencies were jealously pitted against each other, factions formed and dissolved and unconscionable deals were struck in the scramble for office. James Dooley, who had worked on the unsuccessful Chaffey campaign, may have harboured a grudge against the victorious Braddon. 'This matter of winning men over to a reasonable view as to opening up the N W Coast,' Braddon wrote to Smith,

is the great difficulty I have to encounter. In this I have no warm friends or worthy allies in the House. Mr Giblin is a non-resident and as such unenthusiastic. Mr Dooley is [a] mountebank whose advocacy is worthless. I stand alone, but without fear I am confident & trebly armed by a just cause.¹⁴⁴

Provincialism and self-interest handicapped the push to turn the abandoned Mersey and Deloraine Tramway into a railway.¹⁴⁵ Knowing that the river port of Latrobe would become an economic backwater if the railway was extended beyond it to deep water at the Mersey heads, its citizens, its House of Assembly member James Dooley and their flagship, the *Devon Herald* newspaper, fought tooth and nail to thwart what it called the

¹⁴³ Smith to Edward Braddon 3 October 1879, NS234/29 (AOT)

¹⁴⁴ Edward Braddon to Smith 6 October 1879, NS234/29 (AOT)

¹⁴⁵ In 1867 a private syndicate was authorised to build a horse-drawn tramway between Deloraine and Latrobe. Work ceased in 1872 with the line unfinished. See Thomas C Cooley, *Railroading in Tasmania, 1868-1961*, Government Printer, Hobart, 1967, pp.138-41.

'Railway Obstruction League'. While the NWCRPWL bombarded parliament with petitions to extend the railway to Torquay or Formby in the first instance (preparatory to extension right along the coast), their supporter Braddon found himself in the minority:

Moore is playing us false - & Giblin is shakey [sic] about D & M line - I have just met Moore & he showed his hand - he wanted me to believe that if we did not rest satisfied with [a] line to Latrobe for the present we should not get it at all. I took high hand with him & showed my contempt for him & his motives as clearly as I [could]. He said we were ruining [the] chance of railway by agitating & I ridiculed him.¹⁴⁶

Then, in January 1880: 'Moore is against us in this. He is truckling for the Latrobe vote & possibly Giblin will go with him.'¹⁴⁷ Moore also had his nose out of joint. The colonial secretary bristled when Smith asked him to meet the NWCRPWL committee:

I cannot well name a day to meet your committee. As the committee of the League have not honoured me with any of its communications has not even extended me the courtesy of presenting any of its petitions to Parliament, I feel the more desirous of meeting it in the hope of removing the haze of misrepresentation which appears to exist.¹⁴⁸

The railway bill did not pass in 1880, and during a visit of three ministers to the Forth in May of that year when Moore met the NWCRPWL, he and attorney general J S Dodds made it clear that the ministry regarded a railway to Latrobe as the first instalment, from which it could later be extended to the coast.¹⁴⁹ Division over the railway bill helped prevent its passage until 1882. The NWCRPWL campaigned vigorously throughout this period, holding meetings across the north-west and continuing its parliamentary petitions. Smith had become a consummate public speaker, well-read, with a dry wit:

¹⁴⁶ Edward Braddon to Smith, undated, NS234/29 (AOT)

¹⁴⁷ Edward Braddon to Smith 21 January 1880, NS234/29 (AOT)

¹⁴⁸ William Moore to Smith 22 March 1880, no. 23B, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

¹⁴⁹ 'Visit of the Ministry to the Forth', *Examiner* 18 May 1880

Mr Smith...referred to a work by Mr Gladstone showing what railways had done for England, and concluded by relating some anecdotes bearing on the subject. One, George Stephenson's, 'It would be bad for the coo [cow],' and another where a furious bull had put himself in attitude to upset a railway train. The Chairman [Smith] gave us something original in reference to the latter, remarking that there were other bulls besides those belonging to the bovine tribe, who manifested a hostility to railways of an equally valid character.¹⁵⁰

A fierce debate over the railway terminus at Formby in July 1882 found Thomas Hainsworth peddling a lost cause against his old friend Smith. Hainsworth, at least, recognised that extension to Formby was inevitable. 'In reference to the Railway League,' he said,

he could not but consider that their action did deserve the cognomen of dog-in-the-manger, for they had in effect said that if the terminus was not to be at the Heads they would not vote for it. If it had been allowed to go to Latrobe when they opposed it, this meeting now might have been for the continuation from Latrobe instead of from Deloraine.¹⁵¹

Smith, with facts and figures at his fingertips, condemned Latrobe's leading light to eclipse. 'He [Smith] had studied the nature of the country,' Smith was reported as saying,

and was of opinion that the railway should come via Formby. It would be difficult to meet in any other British country outside Tasmania such decided opposition to railway extension. The importance of railways was being proved in the other colonies, and in America the rapid extension of railways was ensuring very great increase of population. As to the cost of railways in that country, he found it stated in a year-book in his possession that the expenses per mile only amounted to a dollar, but in practice the cost was, allowing for rolling stock and profits 1 dol 39

¹⁵⁰ 'The North Coast Railway League', *Examiner* 20 October 1880

¹⁵¹ 'Railway Meeting at Formby', *Devon Herald* 12 July 1882

cents....Everything that could be done to advance the interests of the farmers should be done. Mining interests must go along at a great rate, and in the direction of Bischoff grand prospects were showing. Long Plain had a gold-field equal, if not superior to any gold-field in Australia. Our minerals and our agriculture must give us prosperity.¹⁵²

The bill including extension to Formby passed the House of Assembly two months later. 'I had to work hard to win over half a dozen waverers,' Braddon told Smith, - in the absence of Douglas I stood pretty well alone, losing both vote[s] and vigorous support: & I had to work against the combined efforts of Atkinson, Bennett of Red Gate, Pardoe Stewart & Dooley - all of whom were here as a deputation & to catch member votes. But I triumphed & Formby was carried by majority of 16 to 11...¹⁵³

Bravely the *Devon Herald* faced 19 May 1885 as the 'most important day not only in the progress of the Coast district, but in the history of the colony'. The iron horse chugged past its office - and kept on going, leaving Latrobe's desperate cheers of liberation in its wake. Smith would not live to see Mount Bischoff connected by rail to Launceston and Hobart, a link which, ironically, would come too late to aid the tin mine's development.

The NWCRPWL's secondary focus was an improved system of roads, bridges and harbours in the north-west. At a meeting with the Minister of Lands at Forth in 1880 Smith stressed the importance of roads preceding settlement or at least keeping pace with it - a process which had never obtained in that district. The worst example of neglect was the Slab (or Plank) Road, the experimental wooden artery of the Leven hinterland which a few years of use had turned into a floating deathtrap for man and beast alike. Smith, the *Examiner* reported,

would recommend that a sum should be applied for to be placed on the estimates sufficient to re-model the Slab road and effect an extension to the valuable mineral country beyond....He himself had discovered

¹⁵² *ibid*

¹⁵³ Edward Braddon to Smith 18 August 1882, NS234/29 (AOT)

copper promising very well, about 17 miles back, at a place named Copper Creek, but for want of means of communication to transport tools and provisions it could not be properly tested...¹⁵⁴

A meeting at the Leven later petitioned the governor:

The state and condition of Tasmania's Branch roads is but little known. If we except that of the Huon, ours is the only plank road belonging to the colony. It is utterly impossible for language to describe the degradation, into which this road has sunk. It is wearing out everything that has to set foot upon it. It is wearing out the drays belonging to the farmers, by the bumpings of the deep holes which are shaking them to pieces. It is exhausting the farmer in his own personal labour. It is exhausting his cattle - more of which he needs, in order to cope with the absolutely obstructive hindrances of the slabs. And - it is not our object even to *seem* to exaggerate, or we would draw attention to the actual [danger?] which is being encountered by those who travel upon this ruinous and dangerous way - especially in the case of women and children who go out alone...¹⁵⁵

The Branch Roads Bill which was passed in 1881 addressed this problem (£1,100 were granted for metalling the Slab Road) and other north-west thoroughfares, the coast receiving £28,700 in all.¹⁵⁶ Smith would have been pleased by the allocation of £1,500 for the Pine Road south of Penguin, which was the beginning of his old pining and prospecting track up the Blythe River. 'Glorious is our victory as to Branch roads,' Braddon wrote to Smith, 'and I shall leave parliament satisfied in that at all events.'¹⁵⁷ Legislative Councillor William Moore, however, was the man forgiven and feted at Forth for piloting the bill through, for that chamber was the traditional stumbling-block for

¹⁵⁴ 'River Leven', *Examiner* 24 July 1880

¹⁵⁵ petition to the Governor, November? 1880, no. 422, NS234/1/3 (AOT)

¹⁵⁶ 'Branch Roads', *Devon Herald* 29 October 1881

¹⁵⁷ Edward Braddon to Smith 25 October 1881, NS234/2/7 (AOT)

public works acts.¹⁵⁸ Smith had made sure Moore got a copy of the Branch Roads petition.

Another glaring want was a Mount Bischoff road, an issue which went to a select committee in 1882 before the Van Diemen's Land Company gave parliament its 'out' by agreeing to upgrade its tramway to a fully-fledged railway which steamed right into downtown Waratah. Abandonment to a continuing Van Diemen's Land Company monopoly moved cynical locals to parody of a well-known song:

We will give you a road, and reduce the fares,

But not before an oyster walks upstairs.¹⁵⁹

As the man most qualified to comment on the various proposed routes between the coast and Mount Bischoff, Smith gave evidence to the committee and advised Braddon as to the relative merits of the north-western ports.¹⁶⁰

Smith's campaign for infrastructure kept pace with his mining interests in the west. New mineral fields radiating out from the mountain of tin - Mount Heemskirk, the Pieman and Long Plain goldfields initially - signalled the urgent need for prospecting tracks and bridges, a tall order considering that the colony's fifth largest settlement (Waratah) apparently did not warrant a public road.¹⁶¹ What more proof was needed of the treasures waiting to be tapped than Bischoff itself? The north-west had rescued the stricken colony with this access of untold wealth, yet it was begrudged the benefit of the roads and railways that southerners took for granted.

Smith knew that success in the west depended upon easing the miner's burdens of climate and terrain. Horizontal and bauera scrub kept promising ground untested; rain and snow made creek beds unfordable. Rare fine days and precious energy were wasted carting provisions. The prospector who humped his heavy load into the interior did so knowing his retreat could be cut off by flood waters. A man stranded by the rising Donaldson River had only been saved from starvation by shaking musty flour out of

¹⁵⁸ 'Dinner to the Hon William Moore at the Forth', *Devon Herald* 31 December 1881

¹⁵⁹ 'Mount Bischoff', *Tasmanian Mail* 30 July 1881

¹⁶⁰ *Road, Rouse's Camp to Wynyard: Report from Select Committee, with Minutes and Evidence*, Parliamentary Paper 119/1882; Smith to Edward Braddon (telegram and letter) 2 October 1882, NS234/29 (AOT)

discarded sacks in a deserted hut. A party had had to detour 32 kilometres because the Whyte River was unfordable. Some prominent prospectors had deserted the west for the easier conditions of the mainland.¹⁶² It was in Tasmania's interests to help.

Tasmania's popular hero

By the 1880s Smith was Tasmania's first home-grown popular hero. As discussed previously, he was cast in the mould of Victorian hero-worship, in which, as Davison puts it,

the qualities of the heroic individual set the standard of morality and patriotism. Heroes stood for something more than themselves and won admiration by triumphing over circumstances.¹⁶³

'Heroes are necessary', according to John H Waller, because

they provide symbols of national pride and totems around which a people can rally in common cause; they are essential to folklore and national history.¹⁶⁴

Certainly some rallying in a common cause was attached to Smith. The hagiographic Divine, however, goes beyond rallying. To him heroes are the lifeblood of the future:

Fire breeds upon fire, spirit upon spirit. The vital force of a nation is made of the distillation of the vital force of its individuals. The courage of a nation is built upon the courage of its people in the past.¹⁶⁵

Smith was seen to uphold the values of the British Lion he so admired. Livingstone saved the godless Africans. Smith, it seemed, had saved Tasmania. In

¹⁶¹ The 1881 census listed 874 people at Waratah, but 1,252 in the Mount Bischoff mining district, placing it after Hobart, Launceston, New Town and Longford.

¹⁶² Smith quoted in leader, *Examiner* 14 April 1886

¹⁶³ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, New South Wales, 2000, p.22

¹⁶⁴ John H Waller, *Gordon of Khartoum: the Saga of a Victorian Hero*, Atheneum, New York, 1988, p.452

¹⁶⁵ David Divine, *Six Great Explorers: Frobisher, Cook, Mungo Park, Burton, Livingstone, Scott*, H Hamilton, London, 1954, p.215

1879, however, Edward Braddon, introducing a lecture about Mount Bischoff by the Reverend J Harris Wills, preferred to liken Smith to war heroes rather than the martyred Livingstone and heroic Stanley,

adverting to the feelings of pride which the British have for heroic deeds of their ancestors, how fondly are their memories cherished and handed down in the mighty scroll of names. History furnished many examples of undying interest to all generations of mankind. In ancient Greece, witness Leonidas and his memorable defence at Thermopylae, although centuries old, yet still has fresh as yesterday. Witness for Britons the charge of the Light Brigade, well does Tennyson say 'When will its glory fade?' Look again in France, at the blind King of Bohemia, John, on the field of Cressy. While deserving honour is given to such heroes it often happens that men who in the quiet paths of life pass along quietly and unostentatiously without glitter, parade, or show, but by their deeds bearing fruit bringing prosperity to their fellows, are passed by. As an example of quiet courage, and quiet persistent labour, he gave the name of their friend, Mr James Smith (applause)....Our man plods through the forest, literally with his life in his hands as he went. This was heroism other than that which goes down in the Valley of Death with 600 sabres. All honour to such an [sic] one (cheers,) [sic] the powers that be had shown him scant honour.

Stanley himself had gone down this track by praising Livingstone's 'Spartan heroism', 'Roman inflexibility' and 'Anglo-Saxon resolution never to relinquish his work'.¹⁶⁶

In his lecture, Wills alluded to 'the great labour and indefatigable work of the amiable and courageous explorer, Mr James Smith, to whom the whole colony of Tasmania, nay the whole civilised world is greatly indebted'.¹⁶⁷

Smith the private citizen had used verse to edify Tasmanians. Smith the public man used the lectern. By the 1880s, presumably growing in confidence as a public

¹⁶⁶ Stanley; cited by Cecil Northcott, *David Livingstone: His Triumph, Decline and Fall*, Lutterworth, Guildford, United Kingdom, 1973, p.12

speaker, this shy man's oratory skill, his identification with the needy and especially his heroic status gave him the ideal platform for a political career. Already he was a force in absentia, 'Nature's premier noble', the underdog whose distinction reached beyond class boundaries.¹⁶⁸

That the Mount Bischoff mine had now reached its peak reinforced his achievement. Thomas Jones suggested that the 4th of December, the date of Smith's tin discovery, be remembered virtually as Tasmania's Independence Day. 'The influence of Bischoff's discovery,' he wrote,

has permeated every institution in Tasmania for good. Every church, bank, mercantile house, Government office, workshops, and private dwelling within our shores has benefited by it, and without them it ramifies through ships at sea, people we deal with from Melbourne to London change, and the industrial factories of Manchester, Chicago, and Hartford. The dusky Oriental to-day at Calcutta gazing on our tin trophy, and the rest of the exhibits sent there, respects Tasmania, but dreams not that but for that 4th of December there would be no show in our court to excite his query, 'Yeh Sakman coon sa moluk si in,' or exclamation 'bhoat 'at-cha.'¹⁶⁹

If the colony needed a native son to look up to, here was the man. To Braddon he was another, unsung David Livingstone.¹⁷⁰ Henry Button praised his 'heroic exertions'.¹⁷¹ H A 'Chopper' Nichols wanted to borrow Smith's 'hero of the bush' status by making him a vice-president of the United Australasian Axemen's Association, which represented the skill, endurance and 'true British pluck' of the bush settler.¹⁷² A *schotishe* (a slow polka) was composed about Smith.¹⁷³ His home was a minor shrine:

¹⁶⁷ 'Lecture on Mount Bischoff', *Examiner* 26 November 1879

¹⁶⁸ government geologist Gustav Thureau, quoted by Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 37', *Tasmanian Mail* 17 May 1884, p.28

¹⁶⁹ Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 30', *Mercury* 29 March 1884

¹⁷⁰ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.26

¹⁷¹ leader, *Examiner* 28 October 1884

¹⁷² H A Nichols to Smith July 8 1891, NS234/3/19 (AOT)

¹⁷³ 'Waratah', 'Waratah and Whyte River', *Examiner* 17 January 1891

As you pass over the [Forth] bridge to the right the visitor is able to see the home of Mr James Smith, the greatest and hardest worked prospector that Tasmania, or even the Australias, have ever known....may his name ever be a household word in Tasmania, and may our children be taught to know his true worth and how for years he strove to become acquainted with the mineral wealth of the colony.¹⁷⁴

A lifesize portrait of him was hung in the Waratah Mechanics Institute,¹⁷⁵ another watched over the boardroom of the Mount Bischoff Company in Launceston long after his disagreement with the directors.¹⁷⁶ A painting of Smith by Mary Shaw was placed in the Queen Victoria Museum collection.¹⁷⁷ It was suggested that a local Rembrandt might commit the scene of Smith smelting the first Mount Bischoff ore to posterity.¹⁷⁸ His efforts were commemorated in verse:

Remember Smith to fix him in your rhyme,
And mention what you know about the debt;
And my but that for him I'd slumber yet.
His dogged perseverance, struggling years,
His toiling energy; the taunts and jeers
...[?] unflinching from the jibbing ruck
Who dubbed him madman till his change of luck.¹⁷⁹

Even his falling-out with Kayser attracted the poet's pen:

Long life to our Philosopher for his patient search and toil,
Well he deserves the thanks of all on Tasmania's happy soil;
And in each heart shall gladness shout and make the mountain ring,

¹⁷⁴ Howard Haywood, *Through Tasmania: Howard Haywood's Illustrated Guide for Visitors and Colonists*, 1885-6, 1885, p.26

¹⁷⁵ Waratah postmaster to Smith, 29 April 1886, no. 68, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

¹⁷⁶ according to the Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', *Age* 27 October 1894, p.11; in 1883 Egerer's painting of Smith was exhibited at Mr Hyde's in Waratah (*Examiner* 23 August 1883).

¹⁷⁷ according to Ronald Smith, 'James Smith (1827-97)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 6, 1976, pp.146-7. In 1898 this portrait was exhibited at the Co-operative Store in Launceston (*Examiner* 12 September 1898, p.3).

¹⁷⁸ *Tasmanian Mail* 1 August 1877, p.13

¹⁷⁹ James Marsh, quoted in 'Waratah', *Examiner* 21 March 1883

For to know the mine is managed by a Kayser (or a king).¹⁸⁰

An ex-Westwood farm manager, James FitzHenry, turned an old catchcry into perhaps the original call for a Smith knighthood:

Tasmanians, shareholders, hon members, what have you done for 'Philosopher?' Is there one item of anything in the colony to hand down to posterity the name of the man? Had he endowed a hospital or a university, or given a few thousands to one of those romantic institutes for the conversion of blacks, or even invented some destructive weapon which could speedily and systematically make widows and orphans by hundreds, what would have been the result? Half of the mines, half of the halls, half of the public squares would be named after a part or the whole of the words 'Sir James Smith, of Westwood.' That he saved Tasmania every one will admit, giving it a vigorous and perpetual motive power. Was it worth saving? The saviour is looked upon so coldly, it would seem not. How applicable that beautifully Byronical expression is to Tasmania,

'The cold in clime are cold in blood.'

But in the colony we have a 'gentleman, a general, and a soldier [Braddon],' whom we all hope that, after a long and happy official career, may be summoned before his sovereign to receive additional and well-earned honours, can speak to Her Majesty of the man who, by fifteen years' incessant toil, hardships, semi-starvation often, and gaunt privations, saved a whole country, and that country the garden of the Australias.¹⁸¹

To invoke Smith's name was to stir patriotism and indignation toward the conservative parliament simultaneously. At a political meeting at Waratah in 1881 Braddon used Smith's popular presence to win over his audience:

¹⁸⁰ Nutts, 'The Eighth Wonder of the World', *Devon Herald* 10 January 1883

¹⁸¹ James FitzHenry, 'Vice-Regal Tour', *Tasmanian Mail* 2 April 1881, p.7

There was one individual who for nearly fifteen years spent all that time in penetrating wild, unknown, and trackless forests, and all but impenetrable scrubs, toiling unceasingly, and frequently experiencing the most severe hardships. At last this indefatigable man was rewarded by discovering one of, if not, the greatest mines in the world. The country was saved. 'And how,' asked Mr Braddon, 'was the finder rewarded?' 'In a vestry-meeting-like debate in Parliament some difference of opinion prevailed as to whether he would spend the money, or could he spend it, or would he spend it. 'Of course,' said the hon gentleman, 'that's not this country.' (Laughter, and cheers for Mr Smith)....¹⁸²

Smith's suffering assumed legendary proportions. Braddon himself had depicted Smith as homeless.¹⁸³ At another Waratah public meeting the Philosopher was recreated as a noble tramp in support of the case for manhood suffrage:

The best man in Tasmania begged from door to door - told he was a lunatic; hospitality was denied him because he was a vagrant, he was one of the objectionable class.¹⁸⁴

Who would deny the Philosopher the vote? The 'father of Tasmania'¹⁸⁵ had had it for decades.¹⁸⁶

Smith's presidency of the NWCRPWL was a stepping-stone, probably an unwitting one, into politics. Thomas Cowle wanted to nominate Smith for the House of Assembly in 1883.¹⁸⁷ When members of W R Giblin's ministry, including the premier himself and Minister of Lands, Nicholas Brown, visited the north-west in February 1884, it was only natural that Smith should respond on behalf of their constituents in that region. 'He dwelt on the apathy of the Government in not opening up known mineral-

¹⁸² 'Mount Bischoff', *Tasmanian Mail* 5 March 1881

¹⁸³ Braddon, *A Home in the Colonies*, letter VIII, June 1878, p.26

¹⁸⁴ 'Public Meeting at Waratah', *Tasmanian Mail* 23 August 1884

¹⁸⁵ James Kirkwood to Smith, 10 July 1886, no. 23, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

¹⁸⁶ Under the original Electoral Act the qualification for voting was a freehold estate of £100 in value or yielding an annual value of £10, and in the case of leaseholders, the occupancy of a house or land valued at £10 per year. In 1858 Smith had land to the annual value of £35 (*Assessment Roll* for 1858).

bearing districts, thus discouraging prospecting', the *Examiner* reported, 'and expressed every confidence in the permanency of our mining industry.'¹⁸⁸ More incentive, Smith said, was needed for the discovery of goldfields. A reward should be given for every goldfield discovered, not just for the first. The absence of tracks prevented exploration of mineral deposits south of Castra and near Mount Bischoff. 'He had told prospectors,' the newspaper continued, 'where gold could be found, but when they found there were too many pack tracks they said, 'Then we will leave it alone, for we have had enough of your bush.'" His old routes to the pine forests and to Black Bluff, he said, should be reopened as roads.

Nevertheless, it took an influential delegation to put Smith on the other side of the legislature, as member for Mersey, for which he was elected unopposed in July 1886, after deciding to stand only at the eleventh hour.¹⁸⁹ H I Rooke wired to him 'Do you stand for Mersey District? If so I don't.'¹⁹⁰ Smith, wrote his daughter, 'considered this one of the finest compliments that had ever been paid to him.'¹⁹¹ Rooke contested and won the Legislative Council seat of North Esk instead. Smith appears to have originally supported the nomination of Colonel Andrew Crawford, who, along with Tasmania's future agent-general in London, Dr John McCall, also consented to retire in Smith's favour.¹⁹² It was a big commitment. Members were not paid, which still effectively excluded the working class from parliament. Travelling time from the north-west elongated the three-days-per-week Legislative Council sittings. Braddon's experience would have alerted Smith to the size of the personal sacrifice required. The even longer Lower House sessions left the Braddon property in chaos. 'May I ask you to help my wife in her present farm difficulties,' Braddon had asked Smith in 1880,

cattle running riot in our paddocks. Our potatoes are going to the dogs
and now our hay is not being cut in time and Williams may not do what

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Cowle to Smith 5 November 1883, no. 329, NS234/3/12 (AOT)

¹⁸⁸ 'Ministerial Trip to the North-West Coast', *Examiner* 21 February 1884

¹⁸⁹ 'General Elections', *Examiner* 5 July 1886; E B E Walker to Smith 10 July 1886, no. 121, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

¹⁹⁰ H I Rooke to Smith, undated telegram, NS234/25 (AOT)

¹⁹¹ A B Crowther, *James Smith*, A3160 (Michell Library), p.14

¹⁹² Andrew Crawford to Smith 19 March 1886, no. 37 and 2 July 1886, no. 110, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

is right about fencing on our common sideline. While I am working for the District here [in parliament] I am helpless as to home affairs.¹⁹³

The member for mining

Henry Reynolds cites the passage of the *Waste Lands Act* (1858) as a turning point in Tasmanian history.¹⁹⁴ The opening up of the forest lands of the north-east, north-west and Huon regions helped break the parliamentary stranglehold of the conservative landed gentry which had existed since the inception of self-government. Expansion of central control to include these new settlers and the direct taxation required to build their infrastructure were anathema to conservative parliament.¹⁹⁵ In the 1870s five governments fell on failing to gain acceptance for proposals of public works or new taxation.¹⁹⁶ The good news for the north-west, however, during that decade was the arrival in parliament of William Moore (1871) and Edward Braddon (1879), the former being lionised in that district for his public works proposals as Minister for Lands and Works.¹⁹⁷

In the 1880s the Tasmanian political climate changed rapidly. Spurred by new mineral wealth and the construction of the Main Line and Western railways in the previous decade. The economic revival signalled that the colony's pioneering days were gone.¹⁹⁸ According to Peter Bolger, young middle-class Hobartians accustomed themselves to the slow pace of provincial life that left them time to consider education, career, recreation and even social justice.¹⁹⁹ This climate fostered a new liberalism

¹⁹³ Edward Braddon to Smith 21 January 1880, NS234/29 (AOT)

¹⁹⁴ Henry Reynolds, 'Regionalism in Nineteenth Century Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 17, no. 1, July 1969, p.24

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, p.22

¹⁹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ See, for example, 'Banquet to Members for Wellington', *Examiner* 12 March 1886.

¹⁹⁸ E A Beever, *Launceston Bank for Savings 1835-1970: a History of Australia's Oldest Savings Bank*, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.80-1

¹⁹⁹ Peter Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973, p.164

which reflected developments at 'home' in Britain. The liberals espoused social justice reforms such as manhood suffrage, the eight-hour day, increased representation, municipal and electoral reform, payment of parliamentary members and land taxation.²⁰⁰

The groundwork for reform was laid by the government of W R Giblin (1879-84),²⁰¹ which exploited the new prosperity to, among other measures, usher in the 'railway age', including the extension of the Western line to Formby, as noted previously.²⁰² In June 1886, with the election of Colonel Windle Hill St Hill and G P Fitzgerald to the House of Assembly, the liberals got a foothold in parliament.²⁰³ It was not just the advent of educated professional members that bothered the established power, however. The large landowners, wealthy landowning merchants and manufacturers in the Upper House felt threatened by the mining boom which had made minerals a more significant export than wool, by the emergence of the 'new men' of the developing areas - including yeoman farmers²⁰⁴ - and the rise of the mining community. In 1891 Zeehan (1,965 people) was the largest Tasmanian centre outside the Hobart and Launceston areas. The mining towns of Beaconsfield (1,584), Waratah (1,420) and Dundas (1,080) threatened to eclipse established centres such as Latrobe (1,560), Devonport (1,246) and New Norfolk (1,072).²⁰⁵

This was the political atmosphere to which Smith acceded in 1886 during the premiership of Dr J W Agnew,²⁰⁶ leader of the Legislative Council. Smith was a free trader, with reservations. As the first yeoman farmer to represent the north-west,²⁰⁷ albeit an upwardly mobile one, he was also the very personification of the changing social order. As the Mount Bischoff workers hoisted the Philosopher's portrait high on the wall of their mechanics' institute, their hero entered a higher realm traditionally the

²⁰⁰ Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania: Volume II: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980s*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990, pp.134-5

²⁰¹ See E M Dollery, 'William Robert Giblin (1840-87)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.243-4.

²⁰² *Mersey and Deloraine Railway Act (1882)*

²⁰³ Robson, *A History of Tasmania*, p.135

²⁰⁴ Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, p.149

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, p.155

²⁰⁶ See F C Green, 'Sir James Wilson Agnew (1815-1901)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 3, Melbourne University Press, 1969, pp.18-9.

²⁰⁷ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.199

preserve of the gentry. For one of Smith's correspondents, James Kirkwood, it was a vicarious triumph:

It is no use to excuse myself as being humble etc the time has gone past for that style as the worker is the leader nowadays and can 'cock up his beaver' [sic] with the best of them....I will watch narrowly the reports of parliament and will crow as loud as chanticleer [sic] for the new reign of manly reason inaugurated by the Hon member for the Mersey....²⁰⁸

In reality, though, Smith would not have felt alone: fellow Legislative Councillors Agnew, William Hart and William Moore, at least, were well known to him through his mining interests.

Among Smith's notes is a long speech given by Edward Braddon in 1888 to his constituents reflecting upon his two terms as House of Assembly member for West Devon.²⁰⁹ In it Braddon deplores the Legislative Council's role in blocking public works. He resented men who had grown rich on grants of Crown land and convict labour telling north-westerners who lacked those advantages to make their own roads. The north-west was built in a progressive spirit on the labour of free men and women, Braddon asserted, the yeomanry, 'the bone and sinew of the colony',²¹⁰ who through their taxes subsidised infrastructure in the south that did not benefit them. How would inroads be made upon the interior if not by specific legislation like the *Branch Roads Act* or the *Public Works Act*? Such projects were beyond the boundaries of the road trusts. Roads could be built under the *Waste Lands Act* once the land was taken up; but the land would not be taken up while it was inaccessible. As Smith's ally in the quest for north-western public works, Braddon had come to recognise the power of Smith's modest 'heroism'. To coasters the new member for Mersey must have seemed the perfect foil to help push Braddon's reforms through the 'House of Review'.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ James Kirkwood to Smith 10 July 1886, no. 123, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

²⁰⁹ 'To the Electors of West Devon' NS234/3/25 (AOT)

²¹⁰ *ibid*

²¹¹ Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood*, pp.163-9

Smith was hardly Braddon's 'yes man', however. Conservative on some issues, progressive on others, he voted according to conscience, typically exercising great caution in the wording of legislation. His platform was expenditure on development - which meant public works, mining and defence. Railway extension further along the north-west coast was essential to agricultural and mineral development. The new member pushed the theme that mining would make Tasmania the richest colony in the southern hemisphere.²¹² He entered the Legislative Council at a pivotal time for the mineral industry. The north-eastern tin fields were steady producers. Mount Heemskirk, the Pieman, the King River, Long Plain, Zeehan and Heazlewood had glinted promise in the west. Mount Bischoff and Beaconsfield, opened up in 1878, were mostly responsible for Tasmania's impressive mineral export figures in 1886. Startling new gold finds at Mount Lyell now resonated around the colony. Broken Hill was on the verge of the silver boom which would breathe life into Zeehan and Heazlewood.

In November 1886 Smith joined a deputation to the Minister of Lands Nicholas Brown to urge the establishment of an annual grant in aid of prospecting and assistance to the development of the colony's mineral resources. In advocating an annual vote of £10,000, Smith predicted that deep sinking on the lower Whyte River and Corinna flats would produce payable gold. Stores on the mining fields selling goods at uninflated prices, as well as bridges and tracks, were essential, Smith believed, in order to capitalise on this fast-growing industry:

On the West Coast last summer he saw men there who had expended all they possessed in prospecting. They patched their trousers and carried their provisions along tracks of the very worst kind, where in some places they were in danger of being killed....If people in Hobart and Launceston were aware of the perseverance on the part of the prospectors, and the great difficulty they encountered, he was sure they would be more considerate in regard to providing means of opening

²¹² speech at the opening of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute Museum, *Examiner* September 2 1886

tracks, and facilities for prospecting districts which in importance were perhaps second to none in the world.²¹³

Reports from the Mount Lyell field by, in particular, the prospector Con Curtain also helped keep Smith apprised of west coast needs.²¹⁴

Three thousand pounds were granted in 1886 to encourage deep sinking.²¹⁵ Another deputation had proven less successful. In September Smith had joined MHA's Braddon, Dooley and Young in protesting Brown's 'extremely scant' provision for public works for East and West Devon.²¹⁶ The north-west benefited from votes under the Public Works Construction Bill for wharf extension at Emu Bay, Torquay, Formby and Ulverstone.²¹⁷ Public works, particularly railways and port facilities, Smith believed, were also vital to the island's defence. On this basis he supported the Tamar Land Reclamation Bill,²¹⁸ which would make that river more easily navigable in a crisis:

He was in favor of the Tamar being improved, as it is part of the great highway of the colony, and this will be more apparent in time of war, for then merchandise will be mainly derived from the neighbouring colonies by way of the Tamar. It would be a mistake to think that British men-of-war would convey merchant vessels to the Derwent as against the shorter distance to the Tamar.²¹⁹

On other issues, Smith supported the Rabbit Destruction Bill²²⁰ and the River Tamar Appropriation Bill (which proposed to deepen the river).²²¹ Braddon's private bill to abolish compulsory vaccination, the Vaccination Act Amendment Bill, was thrown out by the Legislative Council despite Smith's support. This issue was pursued with what seems, in retrospect, surprising vehemence. Smith had been petitioned by Thomas Oswin Button, leader of the Leven branch of the Anti-Compulsory Vaccination Society,

²¹³ 'The Prospecting Vote', *Tasmanian Mail* 13 November 1886

²¹⁴ Con Curtain to Smith 3 August 1886, no. 148; and 24 October 1886, no. 237, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

²¹⁵ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 3 December 1886

²¹⁶ 'Tasmanian Intelligence', *Examiner* 27 September 1886

²¹⁷ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 18 and 19 November 1886

²¹⁸ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 5 October 1886

²¹⁹ 'Tamar Reclamation Bill', *Examiner* 8 October 1886

²²⁰ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 4 November 1886

²²¹ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 17 November 1886

which argued that vaccination 'was dangerous, that its worth had not been proven and that sanitary reform was the only way to stamp out smallpox...' ²²² Charles Law, representing the Launceston Society for the Abolition of Compulsory Vaccination, told Smith:

The goodly service you rendered the friends and cause of liberty in connection with the attempt to repeal the Vaccination Act...will never be forgotten by many of your contemporaries and will with your many other noble, self sacrificing and fearless acts cause your name to be revered and cherished by future generations. ²²³

Parliament would agree to the suspension of compulsory vaccination in 1889. ²²⁴

Naively, Smith seems to have regarded the mining industry as a cure-all. As noted previously, taxation was needed in order to provide public works. Through the 1880s two opposing forms of taxation - capital value taxation assessed on the full value of property, and unimproved value taxation levied on the value of land without improvements - were proposed. ²²⁵ Liberals such as Sir Philip Oakley Fysh (premier 1887-1892) ²²⁶ believed the former placed an unfair burden on the small farmer or yeoman class, whose house or farm often represented his entire wealth; they favoured the latter measure which taxed the pastoral holdings of the wealthy instead. ²²⁷ The most important measure of the 1886 session was the Real and Personal Estate Duties Amendment Bill, which sought to tax the capital value of property instead of the annual value. Predictably, Fysh and the Opposition rejected the bill, calling for a tax on the unimproved value instead. Although Smith voted against the measure, he did not side with the 'progressives'. He had his own radical solution. Granted proper government attention, the mining industry, he believed, would raise sufficient revenue to obviate the

²²² Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.335

²²³ Reverend Charles Law to Smith 14 December 1887, NS234/3/15 (AOT)

²²⁴ Stokes, *North-West Tasmania 1858-1910*, p.335

²²⁵ Henry Reynolds, 'Regionalism in Nineteenth Century Tasmania', p.23

²²⁶ See Quentin Beresford, 'Sir Philip Oakley Fysh (1835-1919)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 8, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp.602-3.

²²⁷ *ibid*

need for *any* real estate duties. The *Examiner* reported that Smith did not approve of real estate duty in a new country.²²⁸

This stance alone would have prevented him supporting the progressives' alternative - a bill taxing unimproved capital value - which was introduced in 1887. This was the first year of the 'most powerful' Fysh ministry, which with some 'far-reaching' reforms brought the Tasmanian statute book up to date.²²⁹ The liberals were beaten on this occasion, however. While Fysh claimed that the Taxation Bill addressed the deficit caused by previous government spending on railways, the telegraph and other public works, Smith quibbled with its associated income taxes, levied on the salaries of, among others, ministers of religion. Taxing already struggling preachers would have struck at the heart of Smith's moral system.²³⁰ The bill was unpopular among his constituents; Smith received letters condemning it.²³¹

He also opposed the only section of this taxation scheme which was carried into law, a £10 poll tax on Chinese entering the colony. Although introduced as a revenue raiser, the bill excited debate about the Chinese 'evil' and the civil unrest that accompanied it. Chinese miners, renowned for their thoroughness and economy, had been introduced to north-eastern Tasmania to cheaply test the viability of tin shows. They quickly usurped the local miner, outbidding him for tributes, but while he cried foul, the storekeeper and publican wanted to keep this numerous new patron.²³²

Smith was impressed by Chinese industriousness (a Chinese market garden adjoined his property at Forth), wishing, in a letter to the *Examiner*, that he could swap a few hundred local 'larrikins' for an equal number of these immigrants.²³³ In opposing the tax on moral grounds he brought the benefit of his study and mining knowledge to bear:

²²⁸ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 20 October 1886

²²⁹ Robson, *A History of Tasmania*, p.136

²³⁰ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 30 September 1887

²³¹ John Hope to Smith 20 September 1887, no. 256; and Robert Quiggin to Smith 24 September 1887, no. 259, NS234/3/15 (AOT)

²³² Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast and West Coast*, pp.56, 62-6. See also Eric Rolls, 'Flowers and the Wide Sea: China and Australia, With Special Reference to Tasmania: 1989 Eldershaw Lecture', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 36, no. 4, December 1989, pp.131-40; and Helen Vivian, *Tasmania's Chinese Heritage*, Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston, no. 3, 1991, pp.67-79.

²³³ 'A Man' (James Smith), 'Instances of High-Fallutin', *Examiner* 24 October 1887

Mr Smith thought it strange when leading minds were advocating an alliance between England and China that a little place like this should place a poll tax on Chinese subjects. It was a very necessary thing to tax Chinamen for revenue purposes, but he argued at some length against the bill, and pointed out that many Europeans would, if they had sufficient sagacity and shrewdness, employ Chinamen, for they would wash tailings two or three times in order to get the most they could out of it. A Chinaman when he had made £100 returned to the celestial empire to spend it, hence the European had nothing to fear from his competition.²³⁴

Xenophobic Smith was not. Neither would he outlaw another immigrant, the codlin moth, since he believed chickens and indigenous birds - the defenders of his own orchard - destroyed moths more effectively than any legislation could.²³⁵ Annual recipients of his apples would probably have agreed, but his fellow councillors did not. Ironically, Smith's careful rewording of sections of the Small Debts Bill frustrated his withdrawn rival, H I Rooke, who - with little optimism, surely, if he knew his man - cautioned Smith that he was 'retarding' legislation and that 'great prudence should be exercised by laymen before altering various sections.' 'Mr SMITH', the *Examiner* reported, 'maintained his right to make what suggestions he wished, and the matter dropped.'²³⁶

In general, Smith could reflect upon the 1887 session, when Braddon was Minister for Lands and Works, with satisfaction. Locally, construction of a breakwater at Penguin was authorised, while Smith moved successfully to block the wasteful dredging of Latrobe inlet: this town was within a few kilometres by railway of the deep water port of Formby. A supporter of the volunteer movement (he believed that rifle clubs should be issued military Martini-Henry rifles²³⁷) and the defence of Launceston and Hobart, Smith was pleased to see £5,000 voted annually toward the maintenance of the imperial fleet

²³⁴ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 1 October 1887

²³⁵ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 9 December 1887

²³⁶ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 29 October 1887

²³⁷ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 14 July 1887

for Australian defence.²³⁸ Bills providing for mining beneath alienated land and on land leased from the Crown for other purposes were passed. Three thousand pounds were allocated for mining purposes. The Public Works Construction Bill authorised building the 'road' from Marlborough to Mount Lyell (the so-called Linda track), Smith advocating this as the means of reducing costs at the mines and the base for a grid of pack-tracks into the wilds.²³⁹

The one success that can probably be attributed directly to Smith was the passage of the Mount Cameron Water Race Bill, by which the government bought and extended a water race from the Mussel Roe River into tin-bearing country on the Mount Cameron field in the far north-east.²⁴⁰ The Legislative Council had rejected it during the 1885 session. Those who were 'treading in Smith's footsteps' believed his standing in mining matters would carry the House in favour of the reintroduced bill.²⁴¹ It had not immediately. Although Smith examined the ground as the first priority of his parliamentary term, the weight of his 'expert' opinion only turned the vote in December 1887.²⁴² Since this water-race was the lifeline of hydraulic operations, Smith probably found in the passage of this bill vindication of his long campaign to replace the common sluiceway used by Kayser.

Smith offered no reason for his resignation after a single term, a decision he had made months before:

The hon James Smith, M L C, announces the fact that he will not seek re-election for his seat for the Mersey in the Legislative Council, and tenders his thanks to the electors for their past honour and confidence.²⁴³

²³⁸ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 30 November 1887

²³⁹ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 3 December 1887

²⁴⁰ See Greg Dickens, *The Mount Cameron Water Race*, Department of Resources and Energy, Hobart, 1990.

²⁴¹ petition of Mount Cameron miners to Smith 19 July 1886, no. 138, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

²⁴² 'Parliament', *Examiner* 14 December 1887

²⁴³ Mary Jane Smith to Smith 3 December 1887, no. 343, NS234/3/15 (AOT); *Examiner* 25 April 1888

Despite Mary's support (she took a lively interest in parliament),²⁴⁴ he probably found the Legislative Council too great a tax on his health, his time and his spirits.²⁴⁵ The expressions of regret which followed the announcement, among them one from Premier Fysh,²⁴⁶ suggest that he was highly esteemed by his fellow members. 'I am sorry that you have resigned,' one councillor wrote,

for men like yourself can ill be spared from political life. Politics are so corrupting that when we do get a man who is proof against 'their knavish tricks' we should like to keep him, if only as a dose of moral antiseptic.²⁴⁷

Two letters confirm that, as the Mount Cameron miners had anticipated, Smith exercised great influence in the Council on mining matters, such that 'a serious injury would be done to the mining interest, by your absence at this particular juncture...'²⁴⁸ That juncture was the introduction of new mining bills and the placement on the estimates of money for west coast mining roads.

Not even a parliamentary petition and deputation could change Smith's mind. The brevity of his parliamentary career does not mark it a failure, however: at the very least he increased parliamentary awareness of the needs of the mining industry in time for the great west coast developments of the 1890s. The sight of Smith clambering in the horizontal and wading a river for hour upon hour in search of further lodes at Heazlewood confirmed that the political hustings had not subdued his ardour for

²⁴⁴ See, for example, Mary Jane Smith to Smith 29 November 1886, no. 218, NS234/3/14; 30 October 1887, no. 296, NS234/3/15 (AOT).

²⁴⁵ Ronald Smith, 'Early Life of James Smith and the Discovery of Tin at Mount Bischoff', 1947, 6-701C, ML MSS3596 (Mitchell Library), p.7

²⁴⁶ Phillip Oakley Fysh to Smith 16 April 1888, no. 210, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

²⁴⁷ ? (Legislative Council), 2 May 1888, no. 260, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

'exploration'.²⁴⁹ 'There is I am sure a great deal yet to be done in the way of mineral discovery in Tasmania,' he had told W H Wesley, 'and I often wish I could give more time to prospecting.'²⁵⁰ Now the gate was open again.

²⁴⁸ petition from Legislative Councillors to Smith 8 May 1888, no. 272, NS234/13/16 (AOT). See also E A Counsel to Smith 27 April 1888, NS234/3/16 (AOT).

²⁴⁹ John McCall, 'Mining Intelligence', *Examiner* 26 January 1888

²⁵⁰ Smith to W H Wesley 1 March 1887, no. 379, NS234/2/12 (AOT)

Chapter 8: the Quest for the New Bischoff: Silver-Lead and Rejuvenation as a Prospector

The outback goldfields of the 1890s spawned tales of death-defying desert treks with camel trains and Aboriginal guides. While the expeditions of the likes of Arthur Bayley and Paddy Hannan were thirsty marathons, Tasmanian prospectors battled short course water hazards. Snow and rising rivers were more likely to starve them out, while horizontal and bauera proved equal barriers to progress as sandhills and sun were in Western Australia.¹

Smith's own prospector mythology continued to grow even in his absence from the field. Absurd comparisons with African exploration continued. Post-Livingstone, late Victorian imperialism 'became a faith...to support the idea that the white race was destined to rule the inferior races of the world...'² This was the 'new imperialism' of Henry Stanley.³ Smith's 1892 declaration that Stanley was 'one of the men of the age'⁴ belies that the latter's reputation had for years been under attack. Anti-slavery campaigners and 'gentleman geographers' deplored his 'exploration by warfare' while aspiring to the mantle of benevolent philanthropy he had helped create for David Livingstone. By the time Stanley's *In Darkest Africa* was published in 1890, his famous greeting to Livingstone and that entire spurious recovery mission were standing jokes:

Suppose Stanley should have the misfortune to lose himself? I saw my road at once, *I would go and find Stanley*. And then somebody else could come out to find me. Then some one to find *him*, and so on. In the

¹ For the resurgence of Australian gold mining, see Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), pp.157-93.

² C C Eldridge, *England's Mission: the Imperial Idea in the Age of Gladstone and Disraeli 1868-1880*, Macmillan, London, 1973, p.242

³ Felix Driver, *Geography Militant: Cultures of Exploration and Empire*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, pp.143-4

⁴ Smith to Robert Quiggin, 8 February 1892, no. 586, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

course of time one-half of the world would be finding out the other half.

This is the law of progress.⁵

This did not prevent Stanley's latest instalment, a massive two-volume set which devoted a whole chapter to a description of 'The Great Central African Forest', from extending Smith's mythology, as the most striking of his newspaper biographies suggests. The 'Vagabond' (Julian Thomas) reveres the 'firmness, kindness' and 'sagacity' of the bearded face depicted on the wall of the Mount Bischoff Company boardroom. 'The head,' he writes, 'might belong to a poet or a prophet.' He compares the 'Grand Old Man' with the 'gentle voice and refined manner' to Sir George Grey.⁶ Dr John McCall, the writer recalls, had told him that in France Smith would have received the Legion of Honour. 'They ought to at least make the Philosopher a C M G, but we think he should be knighted,' says the good doctor, providing quite a contrast to Braddon's 1878 image of a colonial curiosity who muddled his meal etiquette. Thomas would have read Stanley's familiar description of forest

which admits no ingress whatever within its shade. We are therefore obliged to tunnel through stifling masses of young vegetation, so matted and tangled together that one fancies it would be easier to travel over the top were it of equal and consistent thickness and level.⁷

While this is not the source of the Vagabond's description of Smith's canopy-surfing, the 'Great Central African Forest' enabled him to give Smith's exploration another dose of hyperbole:

⁵ F C Burnand, *Across the Keep it Dark Continent*, cited by Driver, *Geography Militant*, p.122

⁶ Sir George Grey had combined exploration of the north coast of Western Australia with an extraordinary administrative career, having been governor of South Australia, of New Zealand, of Capetown, of New Zealand again, and finally premier of New Zealand. The Vagabond presumably compared Grey to Smith because it would portray the latter as both explorer and statesman (or perhaps even as a 'Renaissance man'), as Grey had been. See [no author given] 'Sir George Grey (1812-98)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.476-80.

⁷ Henry M Stanley, *In Darkest Africa or the Quest and Retreat of Emin Governor of Equatoria*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1890, vol. 2, pp.73-4

Reading of Stanley's March through the Great African Forest, you recognise that it was child's play compared with the long years of lonely work of Philosopher Smith.⁸

Not if you read about Stanley's 'ferocious' cannibals armed with poisoned arrows and guns; about the multifarious colonies of black ants, red ants, black wasps, hornets, bees and beetles that burrow into eyes, ears, nostrils and under toenails; the nocturnal stampeding elephants; or the month-long diet of nothing but bananas and plantains; the dysentery; and the agonising death that awaits the unwitting patron of everything from the tiger slug to camouflaged, poisoned skewers set up on some of the paths.

Quite understandably, Smith regretted his far-fetched comparison to Stanley.⁹ Still, by this time he would have been well aware of the power of mythology. He took the opportunity of the Vagabond's interview to set the record straight about his Mount Bischoff expedition:

Though on my first examination of the tin ore in a gleam of sunlight that penetrated the gloom of the scrub, I had no doubt as to the kind of ore it was, I thought on reflection that I ought to convince myself as to whether it was not a new mineral.

No doubt Smith had come to regret his joking question to Robert Quiggin about whether his Mount Bischoff tin sample was lead, zinc or silver, because from it arose the legend that he (Smith) had been unable to identify the tin (that is, that Quiggin had made the identification). Thomas Jones's comment in a 'Through Tasmania' article suggests that Smith told him that Quiggin started this story:

One gentleman to whom it [the button of smelted tin] was shown, and knew it to be tin, claims credit of solving a doubt, which never existed in the discoverer's mind....I know it's nice to feel that if you don't earn a victory, it adds to importance, in one quarter, at any rate, to believe you are the first to convey the intelligence to the commander. But it's cruel

⁸ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', Age 27 October 1894, p.11

⁹ Smith to Ashworth P Burke 4 December 1894, no. 380, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

to hear that his glass acquainted him with the fact before you were aware of it. Why are there such things as wet blankets?¹⁰

In 1891 Smith's anonymous antagonist, 'Waratah', publicised the story, but weakened Smith's part in it by claiming that 'Mr Smith...himself has said that he was looking for gold at the time, and scarcely knew what the tin was when he found it...'¹¹ Smith had said nothing of the sort. Waratah presumably referred to a letter he had written to the *Tasmanian* in 1886, which stated that

having found traces of gold on the upper Arthur, I lost these traces before I reached the base of Mount Bischoff. Here I found the strike of the schists more east and west than north and south. In consequence of this I had but little hope of finding gold at the last named place, and so commenced search for tin, etc.¹²

In 1871 Smith had hardly been a novice prospector with the gold 'bug': he had put in more than a decade seeking valuable minerals and working copper, iron, silver and galena shows, as well as gold. This did not stop Ferd Kayser enlarging upon the identification legend at a time (1892) when he and Smith were long estranged. Kayser wrote either in ignorance or with malice. Perhaps he saw Smith as an interfering dilettante who had stolen some of his 'thunder'; certainly he was the figurehead of Kayser's enemies. Kayser's Smith does not even smelt the first button of Mount Bischoff tin. That task falls to the metal's purported identifier, the mysteriously present (and quasi-professional) 'Dr' E B E Walker:

At this time no one knew what ore it was; but when the first button lay bright and shining before those present, the question was asked, 'Is it silver?' which the old doctor, being an expert, soon settled. The full

¹⁰ Our Special Correspondent (Thomas Jones), 'Through Tasmania: no. 30', *Mercury* 29 March 1884

¹¹ 'Waratah', 'Waratah and the Whyte River', *Examiner* 17 January 1891

¹² James Smith, 'The Rev W B Clarke and Gold in Tasmania', *Tasmanian* 28 August 1886

value of the discovery did not present itself to any of these gentlemen
then, as no doubt they all would have liked silver in preference to tin.¹³

Considering Smith and Walker's recent experience at Penguin, their alleged preference for silver is unlikely. Later Kayser versions of the tin discovery omit Walker and increase the collective disappointment when the tin is identified; one has Smith prospecting for gold and silver when he finds the tin.¹⁴ The story entered wide circulation when Donald Clark, author of *Australian Mining and Metallurgy*, got it from Kayser in 1904.¹⁵ In Clark's version Walker chomped on the tin - and Smith was further disenfranchised, having died without receiving a Mount Bischoff dividend.¹⁶ One of Smith's greatest supporters, Henry Button, credited Quiggin with the ultimate identification in *Flotsam and Jetsam* in 1909.¹⁷

The ultimate confirmation of Smith as a self-made man and usurper of the class system came in the 1890s, when his illustrious career was in demand from historians and biographers such as Fenton, James Backhouse Walker and Sir Bernard Burke, of *Burke's Peerage*. Smith's correspondence with Walker, who was preparing entries for the *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography*,¹⁸ shows him struggling both with the demons of the past and his distaste for what he considered vanity. Walker's request for 'parentage, place and date of birth'¹⁹ met this response:

As to my history concerning which you inquire, I thought there was
enough about this in Mr Fenton's History of Tasmania. On turning to the
reference to me in that work you will be reminded that I am a native of
Tasmania.²⁰

¹³ Ferd Kayser, 'Mount Bischoff', *Proceedings of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science* vol. IV (ed. A Morton), Hobart, 1892, p.342

¹⁴ Ferd Kayser and Richard Provis, 'Mount Bischoff Tin Mine, Tasmania', *Minutes of Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, vol. CXXIII, 1895-96, part 1, p.377; Ferd Kayser, 'Tin-Mining in Tasmania', *Proceedings of the Federated Institution of Mining Engineers* (Great Britain), London, 1897, p.570

¹⁵ Sydney Fawns, in *Tin Deposits of the World*, 2nd edn., *The Mining Journal*, London, 1907, p.184, repeats the claim that Smith failed to identify the tin sample.

¹⁶ Donald Clark, *Australian Mining and Metallurgy*, Melbourne, Critchley Parker, 1904, p.185

¹⁷ Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania*, A W Birchall and Sons, Launceston, 1909, p.301

¹⁸ Phillip Mennell (ed.), *The Dictionary of Australasian Biography*, Hutchinson & Co, London, 1892

¹⁹ James Backhouse Walker to Smith 27 April 1891, NS234/3/19 (AOT)

²⁰ Smith to James Backhouse Walker, no. 189, 6 May 1891, NS234/2/15 (AOT)

Walker got Smith's sanitised missing details by mail from Fenton.²¹

In 1895 Smith's name settled among the 'bluebloods' in Burke's *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Colonial Gentry* (volume II),²² the ultimate rebuttal to his still concealed convict lineage. Ironically, in 1894, local district surveyor Richard Hall had drawn Smith's attention to an article in the *Australasian* newspaper which portrayed Smith in a different light:

The writing is in very questionable taste. The author is wrong in his geology, false in his statements, wrong in his surmises and seems generally to be a stupid ass.²³

Hall neglected to say that the article had declared Smith dead. The premature obituary exaggerated his losses, perhaps in keeping with the stereotype of the prospector as a workingman who was martyred in the service of his country - or at least his country's businessmen:

He died poor. This was not his fault, for a more frugal man could not be found. He simply had to part with his interest when the mine was in its infancy and the future rise in shares was not even dreamed of.²⁴

If Smith's investment in Mount Bischoff 'crumbers' suggests he had traded the big trophy for consolation prizes, the Launceston-based Arthur and Long Plain Prospecting Association (ALPPA),²⁵ of which he was a director, took the next big step in the development of the western mining province. In late 1882 Con Lynch's discovery of gold on the King River prompted its prospectors Frank Long, a member of Charles Sprent's 1876 expedition, and William 'Comet' Johnston to abandon the areas designated by its name. On the journey south they arranged with their companions, William Monks and John Healy of the Despatch Company, to share any payable ground between the rival syndicates. As a show of good faith, Long prospected with Healy and Johnston with Monks. No payable gold was found, but a glint of a different kind caught Long's eye as

²¹ James Backhouse Walker to Smith 14 May 1891, NS234/3/19 (AOT)

²² Sir Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Colonial Gentry*, vol. II (ed. Ashworth P Burke), Harrison and Sons, London, 1895, p.860

²³ Richard Hall to Smith, 28 October 1894, no. 275, NS234/3/22 (AOT)

²⁴ 'The Pictorial: Picturesque Tasmania', *Australasian*, 27 October 1894, p.739

²⁵ see prospectus *Devon Herald* 6 September 1892

he examined a gossan formation at a stream later named Pea-Soup Creek.²⁶ The West Coast Pioneers' Museum at Zeehan stands near the spot as a tribute to the wild days that followed.²⁷

The quest for a silver 'Bischoff'

Nine months later, a 37-year-old German-born boundary rider cantered up to a corrugated ridge on the salt-bush plains. Clambering over the ironstone boulders and pushing through the mulga in the wake of a survey party which had camped there, he chipped some samples beneath the crest over which many a shepherd's gaze had passed while mustering in the outlying runs.²⁸ The *Prospector's Guide* in his hip pocket satisfied him that the Broken Hill was rich in black oxide of tin. He set off back to camp with expectations of a second Mount Bischoff - another 'mountain of tin' - buzzing in his brain.²⁹ He was wrong. In a neat reversal of Kayser's Mount Bischoff discovery story, 800 kilometres west of Sydney the tin-conscious Charles Rasp had struck the mightiest silver-lead lode known to man.

Rasp was not the only man seeking a new Bischoff mine. So was its founder. Smith's determination that his syndicate's Zeehan silver property was 'one of the richest in the world' suggests that he needed to replace that disputed and damaged treasure, probably both as personal vindication and as a financial bequest to Tasmania. Mount Bischoff remained his great milestone and the fulcrum of his career. Before and after its discovery he prospected and developed silver mines for which he held great hopes. A little naively perhaps, he never lost faith in his early mineral shows, such as the copper mine at Walloa (Copper) Creek near Gunns Plains, hoping that infrastructure and

²⁶ Wilberton Tilley, *The Wild West of Tasmania: Being a Description of the Silver Fields of Zeehan and Dundas*, Evershed Brothers, Zeehan, 1891, p.13

²⁷ For an overview of Zeehan mining, see A H Blissett, *Tasmanian Department of Mines Geological Survey Report: Zeehan*, Tasmanian Department of Mines, Hobart, 1962.

²⁸ Roy Bridges, *From Silver to Steel: the Romance of the Broken Hill Proprietary*, George Robertson and Co, Melbourne, 1920, pp.50-4

investment would make them pay. 'My income is heavily taxed at present', Smith told Edwin Cummings in 1882,

by expense incurred in clearing and fencing land etc and I am cautiously contributing towards prospecting and mining. I sometimes go prospecting myself. I have several times been out trying to develop...[?]. . .indications without success so far. I am still paying rent for the Copper Creek section...³⁰

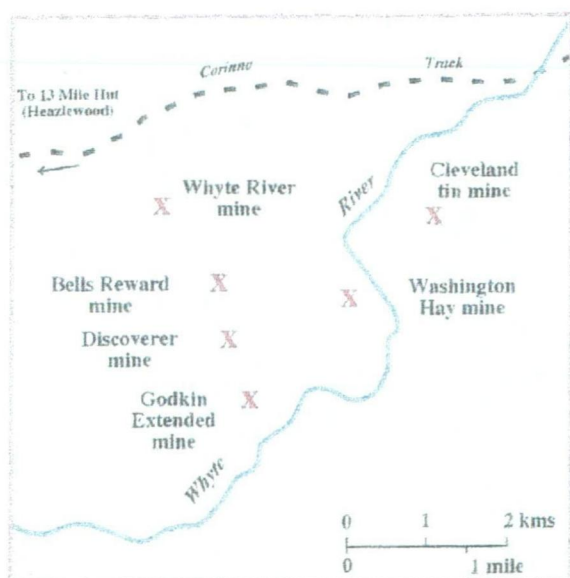
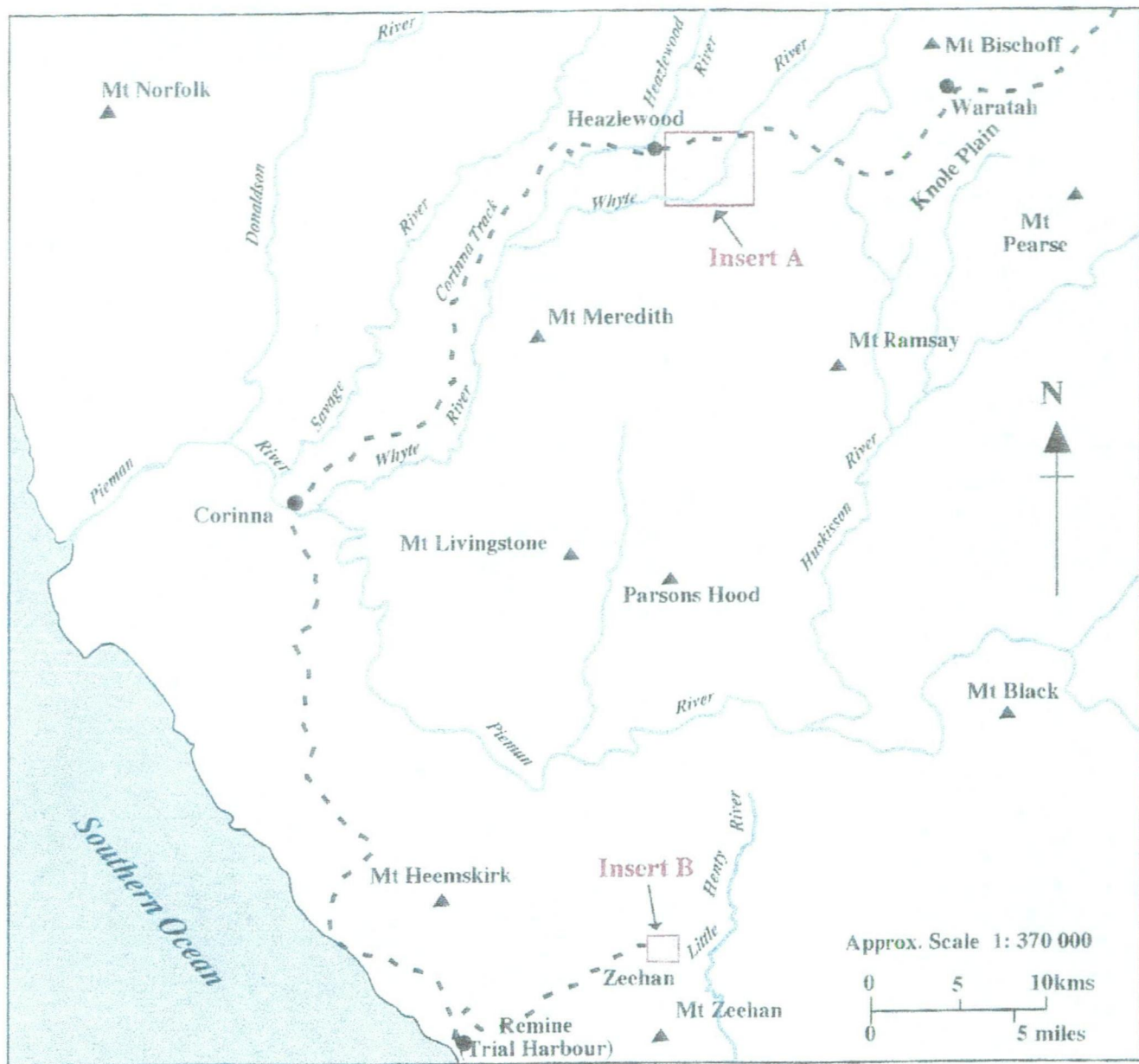
In 1894 he drew attention to the 'important deposits' of red and brown hematite he had found more than three decades earlier at the Iron Cliffs south of Penguin.³¹ Smith also continued to invest in small scale work at the Penguin silver mine many years after the disastrous collapse of 1871, awaiting the right time to float another company. Had the silver find at Thackaringa in the Barrier Ranges near Broken Hill won over investors in 1876, the meandering Bass Strait diggings might have revived then.

Silver, however, would be the bane of Smith's mining career. For all his toil and study, he was never able to master this capricious metal, never able to muster sufficient funds to explore its potential. On at least one occasion it made him look a fool. Its day would not come till nearly four decades after the New South Wales and Victorian gold rushes, by which time three Tasmanian silver mines - Penguin, Mount Bischoff and Mount Claude - would have flopped, each failing to establish the existence of a payable lode. Smith was centrally involved in two of these. His later silver ventures at Zeehan and Heazlewood were also failures, although both must be seen in a wider context. They were pioneering mines on fields that in their own right would prove successful, such that they can be seen as part of Smith's enormous on-going contribution to the Tasmanian mineral industry. Single-handedly he had sparked it at Mount Bischoff; co-operatively he forged the path to Zeehan (and eventually Magnet and Cleveland), attracting prospectors to the core of the west coast mining field. This giant snowball paid its ultimate dividend in copper. 'But for the rise of Zeehan,' Geoffrey Blainey declared,

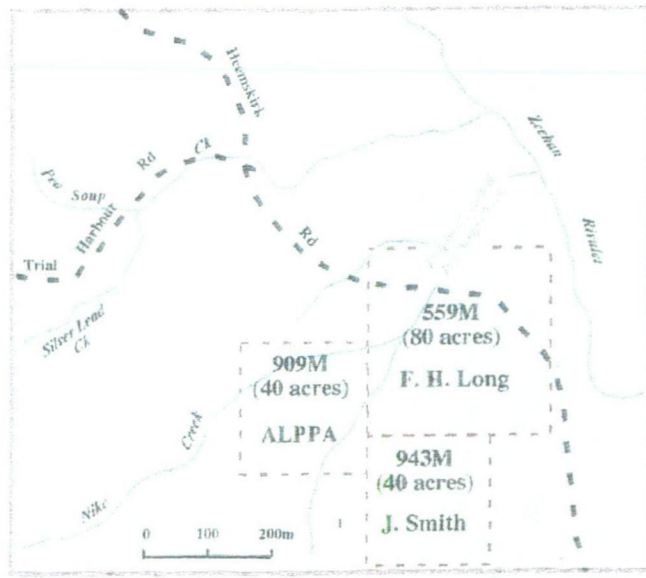
²⁹ R Coulis, 'Charles Rasp: Founder of Broken Hill', 1952; Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, pp.139-41

³⁰ Smith to Edwin Cummings 15 May 1882, NS234/2/8 (AOT)

³¹ Smith letter to the *Examiner* 2 February 1894, no. 55, NS234/2/18 (AOT)



Insert A



Insert B

Fig. 8 Smith's Silver Interests on West Coast - Heazlewood and Zeehan

'the Mount Lyell goldfield might have remained as dead as the dinosaur.'³² The silver boom brought Broken Hill investors Bowes Kelly and William Orr to the west coast.³³ Famously, they were sold a gold mine but bought a copper mine.³⁴

Back in 1880, however, silver remained an unknown quantity in Tasmania. The Mount Bischoff silver-lead mine drew a surprising number of superlatives from a cautious man who had already been foxed by silver at Penguin. On this occasion, Smith deferred to the lessons of his study and the opinions of Cornish miners already resident at the Mount. Unlike at Penguin, there would be no want of experience at the Mount Bischoff silver-lead mine, even if for Smith it was mostly *vicarious* experience. The Cornishman was still regarded as the expert when it came to lode mining but, as was the case with the Mount Bischoff tin mine, his expectation that all mineral lodes lived down as they apparently did in Cornwall proved optimistic.

A S R Osborne found 'champion' lodes outcropping on the surface,³⁵ and James Hancock, whom Smith believed 'the best underground miner in Australia',³⁶ called it 'one of the best champion lodes I have ever seen.'³⁷ Joining in, Smith told James Agnew that 'it only requires good management to make the undertaking a great success.'³⁸ In an anonymous letter to the *Examiner*, Smith urged the silver doubters to learn the lessons of previous Australian failures (which he listed and explained) rather than blanket ban the metal. In introducing his new venture, he invoked the rich silver mines of Saxony and the Harz district in Germany: was there any reason that silver and lead could not likewise be profitably mined in Tasmania? The Mount Bischoff Silver-Lead Mining Company had, after all,

a lode of very large dimensions, perhaps the largest of the kind hitherto brought to light in the Australian colonies. This lode has been traced a considerable distance, and as far as is present prospected, carries

³² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, Melbourne University Press, 1954, p.50

³³ *ibid*, p.53

³⁴ *ibid*, p.58

³⁵ A S R Osborne to Smith 24 April 1880, no. 130, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

³⁶ 'Mining Meeting: Mount Bischoff Silver Lead Mining Company', *Examiner* 3 June 1881

³⁷ James Hancock, 'Silver Lead Mine', *Examiner* 2 August 1880

³⁸ Smith to J W Agnew, 24 November 1880, NS234/2/6 (AOT)

galena rich in silver....The great dimensions of the lode in question warrant the belief in its permanency in depth.³⁹

This is the classic case of the Philosopher's study not sufficing for practical knowledge. He, not Frank Long, was the long-suffering pioneer of Tasmanian silver mining, with all its attendant frustrations. Despite the spectre of Penguin being raised, a company was floated to work a mine which had hardly been tested ('This cry has met me on every hand, in Launceston, in Hobart Town, and elsewhere,' the discoverer, W R Bell, told Smith⁴⁰), apparently on the strength of Smith's name and those of his fellow provisional directors.⁴¹ By the time of its first half-yearly meeting, the Mount Bischoff Silver-lead Mining Company had gained as mining manager 'Comet' Johnston, recently arrived from New Zealand, a man who claimed to have 30 years experience in English lead mining, including the erection of smelters.

At the meeting a shareholder expressed anxiety about the existence of a lode. 'I will illustrate it for you,' Smith told him. 'Do you see that black line upon the wall?' 'I do,' the doubter replied. 'There is just as much a genuine lode upon the section as there is a line upon the wall.' Turning to the body of the shareholders, Smith prophetically and unwittingly mimicked the original Penguin mine manager Michael Stephens when he said, 'If you don't make a rich mine of it I am sure some one else will....'⁴²

Within a few months it was obvious nobody would. Veins of ore were driven upon without a lode being established. Why Smith was so certain about the mine is unclear, as is the reason that, given this certainty, he declined a directorship in the company. He placed too much trust in so-called experts who knew nothing of local conditions. Given the sobering experience of Penguin, and knowing how much trust investors placed in his name, the figurehead of Tasmanian mining should have known better than to heartily endorse a virtually unproven venture. One disgruntled Mount Bischoff Silver-Lead Mining Company shareholder hinted that he would sue the company's promoters, stating

³⁹ 'A B C' (James Smith), 'Silver and Lead Mining in Tasmania', *Examiner* 30 September 1880

⁴⁰ W R Bell to Smith, 18 August 1880, no. 306, NS234/3/9 (AOT)

⁴¹ John Nottage to Smith, 14 November 1881, no. 437, NS234/3/10 (AOT)

⁴² 'Mining Meeting: Mount Bischoff Silver Lead Mining Company', *Examiner* 3 June 1881

that the company was formed not to prospect for lodes but to work a 'champion' lode.⁴³ Smith seems to have been 'blinkered' when it came to silver, anxious, perhaps, to redeem himself or the metal for the previous failure.

The collapse at Mount Bischoff segued into a farce at Mount Claude in the Kentish highlands. Once again bunches and veins of ore visible on the surface promised handsome returns beneath the ground. Inspector of Mines Gustav Thureau's advice that the erratically dipping lodes should be tackled economically by open cutting was ignored.⁴⁴ Between 1882 and 1885 an ill-placed adit was driven 190 metres without striking a major ore body, squandering most of the company's money and its shareholder's confidence.⁴⁵ Better management and greater funding would eventually make a mild success of this mine, but for now it joined the litany of failures.

Thureau would be the architect of silver's redemption in Tasmania. His 1885 report on Zeehan suggested that with systematic management the silver lodes represented a sound investment opportunity.⁴⁶ This isolated field was brought closer to the investor by a new track cut by Joseph Harman. In search of funding, in October 1885 Smith visited the Sunny Corner mine in New South Wales, then Australia's largest silver mine and smelters,⁴⁷ but was told by mining agents that they had 'too much in hand' to tackle Zeehan.⁴⁸ W R Bell had reported with cautious pessimism on the Barrier Ranges mines in 1884,⁴⁹ but at that time Charles Rasp's Broken Hill samples had made little impact on the mining world. Smith knew that potential Victorian investors had been discouraged by the failure of west coast mining ventures. While Harman opened up Long's section and two others held by the ALPPA at Zeehan, in 1885 Bell had made another discovery of silver-lead for the same concern near the Heazlewood River, 24

⁴³ W R Bell to Smith 20 May 1882, no. 164, NS234/3/11 (AOT)

⁴⁴ Gustav Thureau, *Report on the North-Western Mineral Deposits*, Parliamentary Paper 43/1882; *Mount Claude Silver-Lead Deposits*, Parliamentary Paper 62/1885

⁴⁵ Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, pp.114-5, 121-3

⁴⁶ Gustav Thureau, *Mount Zeehan Silver-Lead Deposits*, Parliamentary Paper 63/1885, p.5; Glyn Roberts, *The Role of Government in the Development of the Tasmanian Metal Mining Industry: 1803-1883*, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, Hobart, 1999, p.196

⁴⁷ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, p.145

⁴⁸ Smith to Robert Quiggin, 21 October 1885, NS234/2/11 (AOT)

⁴⁹ W R Bell to Smith, 18 October 1884, no. 301, NS234/3/13 (AOT)

kilometres south-west of Mount Bischoff. Mount Lyell became flavour of the month soon after,⁵⁰ however, and while Bell examined it on behalf of the Leven Mineral Inspection Association, Smith was too busy in parliament to look to prospecting affairs.

Finally Broken Hill broke the silver spell. The Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, destined to be Australia's largest company, was registered in 1885, and by the time the Silverton Railway opened in January 1888 the influx of capital triggered Australia's first national mining boom.⁵¹ A second find by Bell with Smith's assistance at Heazlewood⁵² set the boom reverberating along the north-west coast in March of that year with the floating of the Heazlewood Silver-Lead Mining Company, with working capital of £9,000. Thirty claims were applied for almost simultaneously. Dreams of instant riches overtook the daily drudgery of potatoes and palings:

The recent discoveries have enlarged men's views and widened their horoscopes, so now the hope is fluttering in many minds that 'hard graft' will no longer be required...⁵³

The company was rushed, many applicants missing out on shares. With his usual generosity, Smith gave hundreds away.⁵⁴ Those obtained for 2 shillings fetched £3 12 shillings ten days later, Smith's name legitimising the mine instantly. This responsibility must have taxed him. Workers wanting a start in life, battlers with dashed hopes flocked to the sure thing peddled by the legendary discoverer of Mount Bischoff. Losers in previous mining speculation saw a grand opportunity to redeem their finances:

Remembering your courtesy and kindness at all times, I have taken the liberty of writing this note for the purpose of obtaining reliable information re your discoveries of silver near Bischoff.

I need hardly say I was a shareholder in your original discovery Bischoff, but unfortunately sold too soon when shares were much

⁵⁰ Roberts, *The Role of Government*, p.198.

⁵¹ Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, pp.140-6

⁵² 'Silver-Lead', *Examiner* 15 January 1888

⁵³ *Examiner* 17 March 1888

⁵⁴ See Joseph Raymond to Smith 23 May 1888, no. 298; Thomas Cowle to Smith 19 April 1888, no. 287; E B E Walker to Smith 30 June 1888, no. 348, NS234/3/16 (AOT).

depressed, since then I have lost heavily in west coast mines, and am
anxious to recover if possible...⁵⁵

What if Smith was wrong? He had been about the Mount Bischoff silver-lead mine. Although A S R Osborne proclaimed Heazlewood another 'champion' lode, this time Smith was caution personified, as if chastened. 'I have reason to believe that there are those who are deceiving themselves with regard to mineral indications at the Heazlewood,' he stated.⁵⁶ The importance of his company's lode, he believed, had been exaggerated.

It was at Zeehan that Smith saw his new Bischoff and that 'we must go deeper' became his mantra. The Mount Zeehan Silver Lead Mining Company, comprising Long's old reward claim and an adjoining section, was floated soon after the Heazlewood. Broken Hill was on everyone's lips. Thureau likened the Zeehan lodes to those of the silver capital.⁵⁷ According to Geoffrey Blainey, in the winter of 1888 24,000 leased acres and 370 claims sheltered beneath the bent pyramid of Mount Zeehan.⁵⁸ Tasmanians were not entirely convinced, their refusal to buy into a £70,000 private railway from Strahan to Zeehan being symptomatic of a mining field that did things the hard way.⁵⁹

The struggle of the silver fields

Rivers of fire cascading in the night⁶⁰ fixed Zeehan residents with a reassurance unknown in the attitudes of the charred corpses of Pompeii or among the cast of the movie *Krakatoa, East of Java*. It was not a volcano or an upheaval of smouldering

⁵⁵ John Scott to Smith 9 April 1888, no. 196, NS234/3/16 (AOT). See also Thomas Corcoran to Smith 5 March 1887, no. 53, NS234/3/15 (AOT); George F Evans to Smith 22 March 1888, no. 151; and W J B Smith to Smith 10 March 1888, no. 101, both NS234/3/16 (AOT).

⁵⁶ James Smith, 'The Heazlewood', *Examiner* 28 March 1888

⁵⁷ Gustav Thureau, *Report on the Mount Zeehan Silver-Lead Lodes and Other Deposits*, Parliamentary Paper 48/1888, p.4

⁵⁸ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p.51

⁵⁹ *ibid*

⁶⁰ Frederick R Goldsmid, *Tasmania's West Coast - Then and Now*, Hawthorne Press, Melbourne, 1971, pp.28-9

subterranean peat, but molten slag dumped by the smelter which in 1898 came to rule the 'silver city's' fortunes. So long as the 'lava' flowed, Zeehan had a future. This precarious status quo had been many years coming, and it would not be many more before (in 1917) the establishment of the Electrolytic Zinc Works in Hobart would stem the flow altogether.

As Frenchmans Cap tantalised Marcus Clarke's convicts, so Abel Tasman's figurative ships, Mounts Zeehan and Heemskirk, were illusory liberation symbols for a later generation of actual west coasters. The south-westerlies which burst their 'sails' choked exploration of the river valleys and slopes by fostering tea-tree, bauera and horizontal - and by swamping the flats beneath. How glad Ferd Kayser would have been for Zeehan's extra twelve inches of annual rain on top of what the Bischoff mist yielded him; ironically, on the poorly-drained, underground field this deluge was as unwelcome as the Bass Strait high tide had been at the Penguin silver mine.⁶¹ Beneath the buttongrass lay numerous, equally shallow-rooted bunches of galena. Extracting this metal would prove enormously frustrating, not least because the Broken Hill silver field had raised expectations of large, consistent lodes. Supplies and equipment came at a premium. The nearest port, Trial Harbour, would admit light loads in good weather, but in the prevalent conditions it was dangerous and the intervening dray track impassably muddy. Some mines on this field remained undeveloped because pumps and other machinery could not be afforded, let alone hauled to the site in order to facilitate sinking. Inaccessibility stifled Zeehan's progress even while metal prices soared and Broken Hill boomed in 1888.⁶²

For Smith, the want of access must have been like Mount Bischoff all over again. His annual visit to the property meant three or four days' ride on an atrocious track via Waratah, Corinna and Trial Harbour - a nine or ten-day expedition in all - or the rough voyage from Emu Bay to Strahan, which taxed his delicate health.⁶³ His company had to

⁶¹ According to Blissett, *Department of Mines Geological Survey Explanatory Report: Zeehan*, p.13, from 1891 to 1959 Zeehan averaged 97.06 inches of rain per year.

⁶² C J Binks, *Pioneers of Tasmania's West Coast*, Blubber Head, Hobart, 1988, p.81

⁶³ Smith to W H Wesley 23 August 1892, NS234/2/17; Smith diary entries 12 March 1889, NS234/1/12; 1 July 1890, NS234/1/14; 14 January 1893, NS234/1/17 (AOT)

battle on with inadequate pumping machinery operating above its proper speed.⁶⁴ At least the government intervened this time, but construction of its Strahan-Zeehan Railway dragged on until 1892, preventing the large-scale introduction of machinery to the field.

The iron horse, nevertheless, put the 'official seal' on the Zeehan field.⁶⁵ While Melbourne's land boom collapsed, speculation swept Zeehan's silver-spangled flats and hollows. Poppet heads and engine sheds rose from a field gearing up for the frenzy that would surely greet the opening of the railway.⁶⁶ Then, in August 1891, the bubble burst. The Bank of Van Diemen's Land closed its doors, its credit having been withdrawn by an English backer. The effect on Zeehan was disastrous.⁶⁷ Only those companies with solid capital backing were able to continue operations; most mines folded immediately. By the time the railway opened only a handful of companies were working.

The Mount Zeehan Company survived, but it had another difficulty to contend with. The company was punished for allowing its original mining manager to neglect its labour covenant by working only a small part of its leases.⁶⁸ This was probably the mine's mortal blow. While it awaited the railway in 1890 and 1891, others made a move.⁶⁹ Minister of Lands Alfred Pillinger permitted Hobart merchants, rushing to monopolise trade, to establish stores on unopened ground along what later became Main Street. Further leasehold was resumed for residence and official purposes, including three acres for a police reserve on the richest part of the company's ground. A private residence rose between the manager's house and the shaft he was working!⁷⁰

In vain, Smith and W H Wesley, working in direct collaboration with Smith for the first time as mining manager, battled to maintain shareholder confidence, Wesley asserting that the three lodes on the police reserve possessed 'characteristics of the

⁶⁴ Alexander Montgomery, *Report on the Progress of the Mount Zeehan and Mount Dundas Silver-Lead Fields*, *Daily Telegraph* 6 January 1891

⁶⁵ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p. 51

⁶⁶ Binks, *Pioneers*, p.87

⁶⁷ *ibid*

⁶⁸ W B Button to Smith 29 January 1893, NS234/3/21 (AOT)

⁶⁹ 'Festina Lents' (James Smith), 'Residence Areas at Zeehan', *Examiner* 20 November 1890

⁷⁰ Smith to Augustus Simson 20 February 1891, no. 60, NS234/2/16 (AOT)

richest deposits in the Australian colonies'.⁷¹ Although government geologist Alexander Montgomery expressed confidence in the property's future, noting a 'very well defined lode with smooth walls', and sympathised with its legal difficulties, he admitted that such lodes at Zeehan had often produced little of value.⁷² Smith stuck to his belief that 'the Company's mine will yet be proved to be one of the richest silver-lead mines in the world.'⁷³ Right up until his death he campaigned to have the company's leasehold restored.⁷⁴ He was unstinting in his praise of Wesley's management, stating with unusual exuberance when the company's machinery arrived on the train, 'You are now in a fair way to show what an Englishman can do in ore dressing in Tasmania! Hurrah!!!'⁷⁵ Not everyone shared his enthusiasm for Wesley, who would be refused a reference when he departed at the termination of his contract.⁷⁶ Ironically, the debate about the relative merits of Cornish and German ore dressing methods returned to haunt Smith in 1892 when the mine appeared to be making little progress. 'Mr Simson is infatuated with German opinions of ore dressing', he counselled Wesley.⁷⁷ (Simson, the company secretary, repeated gossip that Wesley had 'lost his standing in Sydney', had been 'mixed up of late with a very "shady" lot of people...[and]...that he drank.'⁷⁸) Smith had prepared a letter for the *Coastal News*, the aim of which was to

show how mistaken some people are in supposing that no ore is lost in the process of ore dressing in certain parts of Europe [that is, Germany]...⁷⁹

Having already injected about £25,000 into the mine, the Mount Zeehan Company was placed in the frustrating position of having to drive to cut lodes that formerly could have been tapped cheaply by sinking: it voted instead to spend its remaining funds on installing machinery. The Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, meanwhile, had reached

⁷¹ Smith, letter to a newspaper April 1893, referring to a Wesley report on the mine in July 1891, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁷² Montgomery, *Report on the Progress of the Mount Zeehan and Dundas Silver-Fields*

⁷³ James Smith, 'The Mount Zeehan S M Company', *Examiner* 14 July 1894

⁷⁴ *ibid*; Smith to Minister of Lands and Works 10 March 1897, Smith notes NS234/14/6 (AOT)

⁷⁵ Smith to Wesley 25 June 1892, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁷⁶ Smith to W H Wesley 28 September 1893, no. 631, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁷⁷ Smith to W H Wesley 28 October 1892, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁷⁸ Augustus Simson to Smith 27 February 1891

a remarkable milestone: 'What must have been the feelings of the discoverer of Bischoff', asked Flagstone,

when he read the declaration of the 200th dividend on the shares of the company? Mr James Smith has lived to see one of the most magnificent announcements that could be made by a mining company in this or any other country, and it is only justice to say one word of congratulation to the hardy and zealous prospector who has done so much for his fellow colonists in discovering such a claim as Bischoff.⁸⁰

One of Smith's feelings must have been bitter irony, that while a mine that had survived a £15,000 overdraft in 1875 had now paid 200 dividends, the bank had foreclosed on his later venture over a matter of £2,100, despite the company's possession of valuable assets such as a concentrating plant, manager's house and other buildings. Credit was hard to come by in the depression years. Between November 1891 and December 1893 ore to the value of only £7,742 had been extracted from the Zeehan property. Despite good returns by tributors and the claim that 20 lodes existed, initial attempts to float a reorganised New Mount Zeehan Company were frustrated.⁸¹

This must have been the most stressful time of Smith's mining career since his disagreement with Kayser and the Mount Bischoff directors. He fell out with his old associates J W Norton Smith and Robert Quiggin over the ALPPA's third Zeehan section, number 943, which they failed to float into a company.⁸² His argument with Quiggin ('We shall soon', Smith snapped, 'no doubt be able to cease to work together in any way.'), at least, seems to be an example of the hot-headedness of his youth that he had since learned to suppress - and it did not stop him sending his old partner two

⁷⁹ Smith to W H Wesley 5 November 1892, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁸⁰ 'Notes by Flagstone', *Examiner* 27 November 1893, p.7

⁸¹ See prospectus, *Examiner* 13 September 1895.

⁸² J W Norton Smith to Smith 31 January 1894, no. 26, NS234/3/22 (AOT); Smith to Robert Quiggin 17 July 1893, no. 504, NS234/2/17 (AOT). See also James Smith, 'Mineral Section at Zeehan', *Examiner* 28 May 1894.

bushels of apples in the following week.⁸³ Smith also lost Wesley's services and copped the ire of baffled Mount Zeehan Company shareholders:

What explanation can Mr Philosopher Smith and the other directors give of this. They lauded it as an investment, above and beyond everything previously offered to the public - and yet this is the end of all its greatness: no murmur of complaint against the manager, no accusing letters against the directors, these lambs of shareholders quickly lie down to be fleeced....⁸⁴

Smith had already resigned his directorship. He 'put his money where his mouth was' by raising additional funds. In 1893 he had owned about 2,800 shares in the company. In order to take 1,000 in the New Mount Zeehan he tried to sell land and his last Mount Bischoff Company shares.⁸⁵ After seven years of virtual idleness section 943 was let under tribute.⁸⁶ The only good news was that, as Minister for Lands, Braddon restored most of the residence areas that had been taken from the old company.⁸⁷

Unfortunately, all this effort and expense would come to naught. While in 1900 government geologist W H Twelvetrees reflected that the Zeehan and Dundas field had over a decade developed into an important and stable contributor to the colony's mineral production, the New Mount Zeehan property was in a 'deplorable' state. The main shaft was less than 40 metres below the ground. Forgetting, perhaps, the mine's residency troubles, Twelvetrees condemned the lack of work done to prove its value, despite expenditure of £14,000 'with no result to speak of'.⁸⁸ Other than in the matter of the neglected labour covenant, it would be unfair to single out the directors or their mining manager for particular blame. Smith believed that the Cornish mining methods which he had espoused for so long had not been given a fair trial at the Mount Zeehan: even so, he possibly took a nagging doubt about this contentious issue to the grave with

⁸³ Smith to Messrs Quiggin Brothers 14 July 1893, no. 494, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁸⁴ 'An Investor', 'Mount Zeehan and Silver Queen', *Examiner* 16 July 1894, p.3

⁸⁵ Smith to William Gibson 4 July 1895, no. 520; Smith to Henry Ritchie 29 August 1895, no. 601, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

⁸⁶ *Examiner* 18 May 1894

⁸⁷ See 1894 correspondence between Smith and Braddon, NS234/29 (AOT).

⁸⁸ W H Twelvetrees, *Report on the Mineral District of Zeehan and Neighbourhood*, Parliamentary Paper 4/1901

him. After all, no mine with which he had been involved had proven profitable while using Cornish methods. 'Mr Wesley,' he wrote in 1893,

would have in my opinion, when acting as mining manager...conducted operations to a successful issue at this mine if the company had been in a position, when he zealously carried on his duties there, to carry out his recommendation to sink deeper as well as to erect a concentrating plant which the company were not in a position to complete.⁸⁹

The leasehold resumption, the delay in installing machinery, sinking metal prices and the unavailability of capital in depression times all contributed to the mine's downfall. The main reason for it, though, was simple: as far as it was explored, the company's ground was poor. Only the main lode ever proved payable.⁹⁰ The other lodes, like most at Zeehan, probably did not 'live down'. Zeehan was not Cornwall - and it was *certainly* not Broken Hill. Today, Smith's prediction that deep sinking would prove it to be 'one of the richest silver-lead mines in the world' seems at best optimistic. Section 943, later absorbed by the Florence Silver Mining Company, proved to be another money trap, running up a debt of about £20,000 to Robert Quiggin's estate.⁹¹ Still, Smith and Quiggin's large personal capital investment at Zeehan bolstered the development of Tasmanian mining, helping to lure the Broken Hill brains trust to Mount Lyell.

Smith's ventures on the Heazlewood field fared no better than the Zeehan sections. Progress was hindered by the lack of a passable dray track. The discovery of rich chloride specimens at the end of Smith and Bell's lode in 1888 had led to the establishment of the Godkin and Godkin Extended mines, the former being regarded as the most promising of the lot until Bell, revisiting an old discovery, uncapped the Magnet lode in 1890. In 1889 Smith had withdrawn from the Heazlewood Silver-Lead Mining Company over the election of a director, William Jones, with whom he disagreed. There

⁸⁹ Smith to W H Wesley 7 November 1893, no. 707, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

⁹⁰ Blissett, *Tasmanian Department of Mines Geological Survey Explanatory Report: Zeehan*, p.156

⁹¹ G W Easton to Mary Jane Smith 11 April 1908, no. 2382, NS234/5/7 (AOT)

was no time to waste in pettiness. After years of cautious prospecting,⁹² Smith and Bell's lode (Bells Reward) had joined a dozen or so other companies on the field, although a third Smith-Bell venture, the Discoverer, failed in the gloom of 1891. A village arose around Jupp's boarding-house, Smith being elected vice-president of the Heazlewood Cricket Club!⁹³

Contrary to some expectations, the headwaters of the Arthur were not yielding a new bonanza, a second Mount Bischoff - or *not immediately*, at least. Unable to raise sufficient funds to attack the most valuable part of its promising lode at depth, the Bell's Reward and Godkin Companies squandered their funds on tunnelling and prospecting the oxidised upper parts of their lodes.⁹⁴ By 1894 the Heazlewood Silver Lead Company could not even tempt tributers to take its property.⁹⁵ John McCall's efforts to float the Discoverer mine with English capital in 1896 were stymied by its proximity to the failed Bell's Reward.⁹⁶ Although successive government geological reports gave these mines the temporary dispensation of remoteness and high transport costs, by the early years of the new century Magnet was the sole survivor on the field.⁹⁷ Heazlewood village went the way of most mining settlements. By the 1920s, as vividly recalled in Marie Bjelke Petersen's *Jewelled Nights*, no sign of it remained:

'We're just comin' up to 'Azlewood township - leastways, the ruins of it.'

The youth looked about him perplexedly. He could see nothing but the unbroken forest towering high on both sides of the road. So the packer explained....'The bush is a savage brute, it makes short work of a few 'ouses; once them as used to live in them 'as gone. It swallows them 'ole, bones and all. Bless me 'eart, if yer was to stand still 'ere

⁹² 'A Tramp on the West Coast: no. 6', *Examiner* 6 September 1890, p.7

⁹³ J E Lyle to Smith, October 1888, no. 485; and 15 October 1888, no. 500, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

⁹⁴ Report by Alexander Montgomery, 26 April 1896, no. 112, NS234/3/24 (AOT)

⁹⁵ Smith to Dr Casey 12 August 1894, no. 288, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

⁹⁶ John McCall to Smith 25 May 1896 and 27 March 1897, NS234/3/24 (AOT)

⁹⁷ J Harcourt Smith, *Report on the Mineral District Between Corinna and Waratah*, Parliamentary Paper 44/1897; W H Twelvetreets, *Report on the Mineral Field Between Waratah and Corinna*, Parliamentary Paper 63/1900

beside the road for a while, it would 'ave yer covered up and rotten through in no time!⁹⁸

The Heazlewood mines are now remembered as pointers to Magnet and the nearby Cleveland tin mine.⁹⁹ That Magnet would rival the best Zeehan mines and Cleveland produce more tin than Mount Bischoff is ample testament to the work of Smith and Bell.¹⁰⁰

Lessons of a successful prospector

In accordance with the tenets of self-culture, Smith's study and achievements and their consequent financial success had lifted him out of the working class.¹⁰¹ As a gentleman investor, he now stood above the prospectors who followed in his footsteps. His relationship with most of the miners with whom he worked post-Bischoff was often that of benefactor to supplicant as well as employer to employee. James Hancock, William 'Comet' Johnston and John Stanton, for instance, addressed him as a poor working man did a gentleman.¹⁰²

Smith's relationship with W R Bell, his friend *and* his employee, was more complex. When Smith and Bell collaborated as equals, partners, in the Heazlewood Silver-Lead Mining Company, both Bell and the company's miner John Stanton found reason to cry 'foul'. Hurt that Smith had anonymously ridiculed him in a letter to the *Examiner*, Stanton maintained social deference in his protest: 'for although I am a working man I have the same feelings as those who occupy high social positions.'¹⁰³ Bell's indignation, however, was raised at the level to which the Heazlewood deal had

⁹⁸ Marie Bjelke Petersen, *Jewelled Nights*, Hutchinson, London, 1925, p.14

⁹⁹ Binks, *Pioneers*, pp.38-9

¹⁰⁰ Ross T Large, 'The Mineral Wealth of Western Tasmania and the Potential of the South West Conservation Area', Tasmanian Chamber of Mines, Hobart, 1987, p.1

¹⁰¹ Hugh Miller, *The Old Red Sandstone; or, New Walks in an Old Field*, Gould and Lincoln, 4th edn., Boston, 1857 (originally published 1841), p.2

¹⁰² For example, see James Hancock to Smith 30 January 1879, no. 41, NS234/3/8 (AOT).

¹⁰³ John Stanton to Smith 9 April 1888, no. 194, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

elevated him, that of Smith's equal, businessman to businessman. He suggested that Smith should have shown more 'genuine business tact' than to keep Bell in the dark about the terms of the property sale. He had continued to treat Bell, according to the latter, 'like a servant.'¹⁰⁴

Smith had his own prospecting scheme operating at Westwood to tide his explorers over the winter. Most of his farm managers, including John Chaffey,¹⁰⁵ George Botterill, James FitzHenry, W R Bell and Alf Smith, were prospectors. Later, as the *Tasmanian Mail's* Waratah correspondent, FitzHenry perhaps showed the influence of Smith's social elevation and the rise of the mining-man in general, when he rebuffed one of the 'lords of creation', Ferd Kayser, with the news that

mining managers are, after all, but ordinary mortals. The miner of to-day
may be a manager to-morrow, a vice versa movement is not beyond the
bounds of possibility,

although attacks on Kayser were hardly unusual.¹⁰⁶

Smith's liberalness in mining matters led to appeals for help from lone diggers who cited him as their mentor. One supplicant Smith financed, John Ward, baffled his detractors by producing some rich tin ore from Mount Heemskirk.¹⁰⁷ In 1882 Arthur River prospector Max Graue requested financial help, exhorting Smith:

I have heard so much about you, your pluck, and can well imagine what
hardships you must have suffered. You are my model and sometimes
when I am near of giving up, I think of you and then, with a fresh heart
and courage I am at it again with soul and body.

Having checked Graue's credentials with his old friend George Anderson, Smith assisted him once but declined a second request for funds.¹⁰⁸ After this Smith appears to have shut up shop, conserving his funds for partners he knew he could trust. One

¹⁰⁴ W R Bell to Smith 8 May 1888, no. 312, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

¹⁰⁵ In 1891 Smith helped out Chaffey's family who were struggling after his (Chaffey's) death (Elizabeth Chaffey to Smith ? July 1891, NS234/3/19 [AOT]).

¹⁰⁶ 'Mount Bischoff', *Tasmanian Mail* 18 June 1881, p.21

¹⁰⁷ Huett to Smith 14 October 1881; John Ward to Smith 14 October 1881; Thomas Clarkson to Smith 15 October 1881, no. 403, NS234/3/10. See also Smith's diary entry 7 October 1881, NS234/1/3 (AOT).

¹⁰⁸ Max Graue to Smith 23 September 1882 and 28 November 1882, NS234/3/11 (AOT)

dubious get-rich-quick saga dragged on for years. John Polkey primed his potential partners, including Smith, with tales of a fabulous tin deposit on the Central Plateau. After a syndicate had been formed, this 19th-century Lasseter and his mysterious godfather at Lake Sorell refused to show anyone the site, tantalising them almost but not quite enough to get their money.¹⁰⁹

Comparison with the prospectors with whom Smith was associated bear out the 'secrets' of his success. For example, George Renison Bell, the discoverer of tin in north-eastern Tasmania and of the Renison Bell field in the west, was equally devoted to the field, but derived little financial benefit from his finds, was denied recognition and reward until his final years, and struggled most of his life to support a wife and large family. To be fair to the Philosopher, he 'made his own luck', whereas Bell caused much of his own distress. While Smith was a pioneer, Bell to some extent was a follower, following Smith, and Smith's planning was better. He made himself financially secure by first establishing a farm, and his marriage was predicated on financial security.

A formal reward mechanism would have saved George Renison Bell and his family years of poverty. His annuity was granted only six years before his death, 35 years after his discovery of tin in the north-east and 33 years after the issue of a reward was first raised by William Ritchie.¹¹⁰ Still, contemporary critics of George Renison Bell may have pointed to the reward lease system as an incentive to prospecting, and added that he (Bell) was part of a democratic society and free enterprise market; that if prospecting did not pay him, he need not do it. Why did he not control his own destiny? Should not he have saved himself? Surely, as Smith proved at Mount Bischoff, what was best for the prospector should, logically, also be best for the island. Bell's son Alec wrote:

There's one thing I don't understand about my old Dad. He was always
moaning about lack of money, and when he had the greatest chance in

¹⁰⁹ Albert Field to Smith 26 November 1883, no. 352; 29 November 1883, no. 356A; 17 December 1883, no. 366 etc, NS234/3/12 (AOT). Also John Polkey to Smith 1 February 1884, no. 35; 2 February 1886, no. 11; and March 1886, NS234/3/14 (AOT)

¹¹⁰ William Ritchie to Smith 9 May 1876, no. 136, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

the world he failed to cash in on it. Call it unselfishness, if you like. I have another name for it.¹¹¹

It is characteristic of Bell that instead of dreaming about finding gold nuggets, in the classical prospector's daydream about Eldorado, he managed to turn it into a lesson about covetousness: in Bell's dream *the treasure was on another's land*.¹¹² So it went for him. Tin worth millions of pounds was packed and shipped out of the north-east as the result of his discoveries, yet, when he sought a reward for them, more than a dozen others - some of them probably reckoning him a pushover - raised their hands too, thwarting him for decades. The tin mine, Australia's biggest, that bears his name near Rosebery has long since dwarfed Mount Bischoff production. It was mostly misfortune, though, that caused Bell to miss out on Renison: while he received only 50 of the original 600 shares in the original Renison Bell company, it was only in the 1960s that technology enabled its low-grade tin deposit to be very profitably exploited.¹¹³ While Smith is an exception to the rule, that Bell's share of the north-eastern and Renison tin spoils probably barely reached four figures seems to reinforce the old cliché that prospectors do not prosper.

Bell is a case of bad luck *and* bad management. Although he showed nous in selling his north-eastern tin claims, he was too impractical to make a living out of a profession that even practical men generally found unremunerative. Except for labouring, he appears to have been unskilled in any other line of work outside mining, lamenting to his wife in 1885 that 'I must go look for a claim and hope to find one, it is the best thing to do that I know of...'¹¹⁴ Bell limited his opportunities for work as a mining manager by not keeping up with technology: he could not operate a stamper battery.¹¹⁵ His working life was a series of missed opportunities. Smith advised him to shore up his prospecting career with property, which had been his own system.¹¹⁶ Yet in 1907, at the age of 66, Bell was living in a rented house in Devonport, humiliatingly explaining to a

¹¹¹ E A Bell, 'The Origin of Renison', *Advocate* 5 January 1974

¹¹² Bell to Phoebe Bell 6 March 1885 (Bell papers)

¹¹³ Kerry Pink and Patsy Crawford, *Renison: the Slumbering Giant*, Renison Ltd, Zeehan, 1996, p.4

¹¹⁴ George Renison Bell to Phoebe Bell 6 March 1885 (Bell papers)

¹¹⁵ George Renison Bell to Alec Corrie 23 August 1897 (Bell papers)

puzzled tax commissioner that the reason that his income was so small was that for years he had been kept by his sons:

Being only occasionally employed prospecting or inspecting it has for years been recognized that my boys who live at home as they all do provide the house and pay the rent amongst them, I merely tending the garden and getting the wood.¹¹⁷

In the winter of 1876 he followed Smith from 'tin man' to 'husband-man'¹¹⁸ by becoming engaged to 25-year-old fellow Friend Phoebe Cox. The 35-year-old determined to better prepare himself for the role of provider by studying mineralogy and assaying at the School of Mines in Ballarat.¹¹⁹ This experience probably served him well, but he returned to Launceston a few months before his wedding *without a certificate* to find that another assayer had set up in his absence and that he was a bystander to proceedings (which had originally included his own name¹²⁰) in favour of rewarding Smith.¹²¹

It has been said not just of miners that 'Men with families are less vigorous, less energetic, less daring than single men.'¹²² They also need more money and are burdened by greater responsibility. Smith's 'glory days' as a prospector were done before his wedding: he had no personal financial need of tramps in the bush after that time. Bell was separated from his family for months at a time (his anguish when one of his daughters, Mabel, died during his absence in 1898 can be imagined¹²³) while he tried to scrape a living from grub-staked prospecting, mine inspection and management of small mines.

The second prospector to be publicly acknowledged and pensioned was not the 'junior' 'tin man', Bell, but Frank Long, the 1882 discoverer of silver-lead at Peasoup

¹¹⁶ Smith to George Renison Bell 8 July 1876, NS234/2/3 (AOT)

¹¹⁷ George Renison Bell to M Hogg, tax commissioner, 28 April 1907 (Bell papers)

¹¹⁸ George Renison Bell to Smith 6 July 1876, NS234/3/5 (AOT). Smith had married in September 1874 after the Mount Bischoff tin mine had won him financial security.

¹¹⁹ George Renison Bell to Smith 10 June 1876, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

¹²⁰ William Ritchie to Smith 8 May 1876, NS234/3/5 (AOT)

¹²¹ George Renison Bell to Smith 7 August 1877, NS234/3/6 (AOT)

¹²² Grant H Smith, p.152; cited in Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore: an Illustrated Composition and Documentary Compilation with Emphasis on the Spirit and History of Mines*, Portland, Oregon, 1970, p.589

Creek, now downtown Zeehan. In 1891 Long had been 'stranded' in the Hobart Hospital, a 'broken, poverty-stricken', rheumatic man reliant upon charity.¹²⁴ Drink probably claimed his reward of 300 shares in his employer, the Arthur and Long Long Plains Prospecting Association. He drank away the Zeehan shares of his partner at the time of that discovery, William Johnston, who had tried to rescue him:

I don't want to throw any more discredit on Long than I can particularly help. Although I am bound to state one of the true facts and I first say that there can be no better bush man or true hard working man than F Long as long as he had any one with him that could keep him from drink.....[I] may say it was owing to him [?] me out of my money and promising me his share for to replace it that I was compelled to sell my own share...¹²⁵

While Zeehan was lining investors' pockets, Long plunged into the Gordon River country and Smith intervened to save the unemployed Johnston and family from eviction from their squat on a Crown reservation at Penguin. Mary had already given the family some old clothes.¹²⁶ A petition was raised in favour of evicting Johnston's wife, Clara, who implored Smith,

I shall have to face and find a living for our selves. Oh Mr Smith, you do not know my sufferings and that of my poor children and this morning no friends no means not even food for a family to cheer them truly my case is most lamentable hard, dear sir, I place my unbounded confidence in you...¹²⁷

Johnston appears to have also taken to drink. In a later, undated letter his wife recalls him trying to smash the door in, threatening their son and brandishing a stash of notes and gold that he refused to share with the family:

¹²³ George Renison Bell diary 25 September 1898 (Judy Cole)

¹²⁴ 'The West Coast Silver Fields', *North Coast Standard* 9 December 1891

¹²⁵ William Johnston to Smith 2 January 1890, no. 28, NS234/3/18 (AOT)

¹²⁶ Clara Johnston to Smith, 29 April 1888, no. 254; and 8 May 1888, no. 271, NS234/3/16 (AOT)

¹²⁷ Clara Johnston to Smith 20 December 1889, no. 423, NS234/3/17 (AOT)

I was all but exhausted, my reason almost left me with hunger. Now, what are we to exist on & a minister will not enter this House through W Johnston's scandal [sic]. Still I am left to die as it were uncared for. Oh Mr Smith I have stuck to my house because you won it.¹²⁸

Things did not improve during the depression years. Clara Johnston supplicated Mary, whom she addressed as 'Beloved Madame', again in 1893, after apparently asking Smith to seek government aid on her behalf. Johnston had disappeared, she claimed, after injuring his eye in a mining accident, again leaving wife and children destitute. Her tale of woe now included a sick baby and 'almost bleeding to death' herself.¹²⁹ There is no further correspondence and no indication of whether Smith took further action in the matter - but what a contrast the Johnstons present to Smith's happy family household.

While such stories invoke sympathy, especially for the long-suffering families of Bell and Johnston, they also reinforce the lesson of financial independence. Without it, even the most successful prospectors were at the mercy of their employers, benefactors and the parliament. Giving a prospector a small pension when he is already, as in Long's case, an ageing, rheumatic alcoholic, will not benefit him nearly as much as him establishing financial independence to begin with. Long's pension was paid in weekly instalments of £1, presumably so that he could not mount the bender to end all binges.

It should be remembered that the prospector was not the only member of the mining community to suffer hardship. Huge sums were lost by investors as a result of prospectors 'salting' or 'wild-catting' claims, that is, by misrepresentation of the value of a claim, by selling a claim that was not his to sell or which did not even exist.¹³⁰ Often the prospector's ignorance was the investor's bad luck or bad risk. The prospector Mark Ireland, though nostalgic in retirement, was refreshingly candid on this issue, explaining that while the prospector was hamstrung without capital, he often caused his financier to lose out:

¹²⁸ Smith notes NS234/14/7 (AOT)

¹²⁹ Clara Johnston to Mary Jane Smith 30 April 1893, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

¹³⁰ Bertram Barker, *North of '53: the Adventures of a Trapper and Prospector in the Canadian Far North*, Methuen & Co, London, 1934, p.82

in many cases no doubt he [the prospector] has himself to blame....for, sad to relate, more often than otherwise the property is opened out, and does not come up to expectations, although looking well on the surface.¹³¹

Ireland gives a graphic account of this in the form of grub-staked prospecting parties who wasted months sluicing titanniferous iron, which they mistook for tin, at Mount Heemskirk and shipping it to Hobart - where it was unceremoniously dumped into the Derwent.¹³²

On the other hand, unlike members of other professions, prospectors suffered from the 'invisibility' of mining. According to Binks, 'few benefited materially in proportion to the effort demanded of them, an effort which in a town would have won them advancement and respect.'¹³³ This is a crucial insight. Because it has often been conducted underground or, especially in the case of Tasmania, on the sides of mountains and in the depths of the forests, mining has been 'out of sight and out of mind'. Some of Smith's fellow directors on the board of the Mount Bischoff Company and some of the parliamentarians who influenced the course of the mining industry, had little idea of conditions on the west coast, let alone the hazards of mining or of the prospector's life. 'If people in Hobart and Launceston were aware of the perseverance of the prospectors and the great difficulty they encountered,' Smith was reported as saying in 1886, 'he was sure they would be more considerate in regard to providing means of opening tracks, and facilities for prospecting...'¹³⁴

This 'invisibility' has afflicted mining throughout its history. Wolfgang Paul contends that 'since ancient times miners here and there have formed a community of its own generally unknown or misunderstood by the outside world.'¹³⁵ Only occasionally, in instances such as the Eureka Stockade, the mass defection of Ural miners to the eighteenth-century Pugachev serf revolt which almost toppled Catherine the Great of

¹³¹ Ireland, *Pioneering on North-East Coast*, p.29

¹³² *ibid.* See also Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, p.17.

¹³³ Binks, *Pioneers*, p.47

¹³⁴ 'The Prospecting Vote', *Tasmanian Mail* 13 November 1886

¹³⁵ Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.867

Russia,¹³⁶ and the British coal strike under Arthur Scargill in the 1980s,¹³⁷ has mining assumed a presence that forced the public at large to acknowledge its difficulties. It faced an uphill battle to be recognised as a form of engineering, because, as Bennett points out, it was

the least known or understood [form] by the public. The work of a mining engineer is usually far removed from centers of population. Also, most of it takes place far out of sight. There is even a good deal of ignorance about it on the part of other kinds of engineers.¹³⁸

The grub-staked prospector was briefly visible when he struck something good, but at the same instant his usefulness ended. Frank Long continued to make himself visible to the syndicate that grub-staked him after his discovery of the Zeehan silver, by leaving debts that perhaps he should have been spared (by means of a reward) in the first place.¹³⁹ The prospector often had no guarantee of a share in the profits - and there was certainly no pension plan. Smith appears to have realised this at an early stage in his own career. As previously discussed, he secured his financial position with property, and shirked the traditional prospecting terms of wages, provisions and a discretionary cut of any profits.¹⁴⁰ When Smith discovered Mount Bischoff, he was fortunate to be working independently and to have property to guarantee that independence by enabling him to at least begin opening up the mine unaided.

By the 1890s it would have been fair to ask why, if Smith's pension justly rewarded him for contributing to Tasmania's prosperity, men like George Renison Bell, Frank Long, the McDonough brothers and Steve Karlson had not likewise been rewarded. All of them had contributed to Tasmania's mining boom. Yet while Smith was a gentleman investor, Bell scraped a living as a mine manager and the remainder still chased a few colours while exposure to the wet and cold fixed itself in their

¹³⁶ See V I Bugnov, *Pugachev*, Moldavia Gvardiia, Moscow, 1984

¹³⁷ See Michael Crick, *Scargill and the Miners*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1985

¹³⁸ Russell H Bennett, *Quest for Ore*, T S Denison and Co, Minneapolis, 1963, p.379; cited by Wolfgang Paul, *Mining Lore*, p.867

¹³⁹ Edward Dobson to Smith 13 August 1888, no. 406, NS234/3/16; Samuel Sutton to Smith 11 April 1889, no.140, NS234/3/17 (AOT)

constitutions. The fate of the brothers McDonough and Steve Karlson, how James Crotty and others came to acquire the paradise of paupers, rests on the top shelf of Tasmanian mining lore.¹⁴¹ Karlson died miserably of tongue cancer in 1904, at the age of 49.¹⁴² Blainey has recorded how, towards the end of his life, Mount Lyell co-discoverer Bill McDonough, as nightwatchman for the North Lyell Company, would wander the deserted mine buildings by lantern-light, like the ghost of a miner - or the 'mine monk' - seeing a

forest where stood the valley of desolation, and 'hearing' the sound of pick and axe, and in his mind the rushing torrent of the sluice box drowned the throb of the mine pumps.¹⁴³

In 1906 Mick McDonough lost an arm and two fingers on the other hand when he fainted into a campfire at Balfour.¹⁴⁴ His lost share in the Iron Blow still rankled with him as his three remaining digits turned over the stones of Black Bluff.¹⁴⁵ As the *Mercury* had supported Long's pension, it got behind Mick McDonough's, noting that those who

by their pioneer work, added materially to the wealth of the community are far more entitled to recognition than civil servants who have held well-paid billets for more than half a lifetime.¹⁴⁶

There was no guarantee, of course, that if Long or the McDonoughs were granted a sufficient sum of money they would buy themselves 'digs' in town and put their feet up for some well-earned rest. These men were inured to the bush life and knew no other. They could not be 'saved' from themselves by money. It would be easy to dismiss the record of pensions granted to nineteenth-century Tasmanian prospectors as one of niggardly ingratitude, but the fact is that of those rewarded (Smith, Bell, the McDonoughs, the Meredith brothers and Tom Currie) perhaps only Smith and Bell were likely to make good use of a substantial sum of money. Perhaps that is a paternalistic

¹⁴⁰ J W Norton Smith to Van Diemen's Land Company, OD 40, 10 July 1872, VDL47/1 (AOT)

¹⁴¹ See Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, pp.31-2

¹⁴² *ibid*, p.237

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p.236

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p.237

¹⁴⁵ 'A Prospector's View', *Examiner* 11 October 1909, p.2

attitude; it was Long's prerogative to drink himself to death: at least that way he was the master of his own destiny, a claim that of Long's contemporaries Smith alone could apply to his entire prospecting career.

Return to the bush

In 1894 that career came almost full circle as Smith determined to beat hard economic times by establishing the elusive Forth River goldfield and continuing to search for the next 'Bischoff'. Again a personal imperative balanced with a 'national good': rather than cut his severe financial losses on the silver fields, he 'went for broke'.¹⁴⁷ Remarkably, years of illness and frustration with mining ventures seem to have only invigorated him. After champing at the bit for years, he was now almost free of mining business, having resigned directorships at Heazlewood and Zeehan. Smith was 67 years old. The 'old guard' of his mining career were gone or on their last legs. Thomas Hainsworth was losing the battle with diabetes. William Ritchie was blind and doddering. Ferd Kayser and his directors were letting the Mount Bischoff tin mine, Smith's great treasure, crumble, the 'King of the Waratah' boasting complacently that 'It will not be a quarter worked out when our grandchildren are drawing dividends.'¹⁴⁸ Even S B Emmett had retired. The Philosopher was starting anew. 'Don't you wish yourself at Coolgardie?', George Anderson vicariously reminisced.

Would it not be jolly if the old times could be reproduced: but I fear that
a little pick and shovel work would go a long way with us nowadays...¹⁴⁹

It was nothing like the old times. Several small gold and tin rushes at Middlesex about three decades after Smith's Golden Point find had secured public attention and private investment, the like of which Smith could only have dreamed at that earlier time.

¹⁴⁶ 'Pensions for Mining Discoveries', undated newspaper story from the *Mercury* (Bell papers)

¹⁴⁷ Smith to Joseph Harman 29 May 1894, no. 168, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁴⁸ The Vagabond, 'Mount Bischoff', *Age* 27 October 1894, p. 11

¹⁴⁹ George Anderson to Smith 19 July 1894, no. 196, NS234/3/22 (AOT)

The upper Forth highlands were also now more accessible. The Forth River was even bridged; Middlesex had a postal service and a store. More importantly, prospecting without the financial constraints of yesteryear and with at least one companion - Smith's 18-year-old son Leslie - was safer and less taxing, which pleased Mary. 'It is so nice for me to think of you and Leslie being in the bush together,' she wrote to him in 1895, 'the old times have changed, I should not feel so comfortable about you if you were alone...'¹⁵⁰ Smith told Reverend William Law that he intended

to start prospecting again. It is all a mistake for people to tell me in the present state of the colony with regard to general depression that I ought not to do more in searching for minerals. I can of course now make work light with the assistance I can have compared with what it formerly was with me.¹⁵¹

The greatest imperatives, however, were probably more basic: love of the bush and of adventure. Two 'tours' to Middlesex increased his confidence in the existence of payable gold deposits in that area.¹⁵² Over the summer of 1894/95 he spent almost four months in the bush, including a 34-day tour to Mount Bischoff, from which he returned with botanical specimens for Baron von Mueller.¹⁵³ It was not for want of trying that the only mineral discovery of note he made was a new strike at Bell's Reward in 1895.

During the next two years Smith unwittingly paid his last respects to old friends and old stamping-grounds. In 1896 he was pleased to find that the almost blind William Ritchie possessed an appliance that allowed him to write his first letter to Smith in years. 'It must be...a great consolation to you,' Smith replied,

to devote much of your time to writing. You will, I believe, with a little suggestion from your friends as to just the requisite pressure with the pencil, write better than some clever people who have perfect eyesight.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Mary Jane Smith to Smith 15 February 1895, no. 21, NS234/3/23 (AOT)

¹⁵¹ Smith to William Law 21 September 1894, no. 297, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁵² Smith to William Gibson 9 January 1895, no. 399, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁵³ Smith to Mueller 15 December 1894, no. 382, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁵⁴ Smith to William Ritchie 17 January 1896, no. 725, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

A friendship predicated on the formation of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company had endured despite the tremendous stresses of Smith's split with the company. Shortly after Smith's annual gift to Ritchie of a case of apples was acknowledged in the following year, however, his old collaborator breathed his last.¹⁵⁵

Just as George Anderson wanted to bring back the old times, Smith's final exchange with Thomas Hainsworth also strips away the decades. The year might have been 1859. Here was Hainsworth still tied up in knots of his own making, now tightened by age:

Sometimes I feel as if my life had been wasted and in my old age difficulties grow thicker and thicker around me....Viewed from a world standpoint *my life has been a failure*; but sometimes I get a momentary glance from a higher point and then I believe God has given me some point to my labours.

I am suffering and struggling and to outward appearance I seem to struggle with success, but no one, not even my wife, knows anything of my extreme mental worry, for I cannot at all times see things from the higher standpoint.¹⁵⁶

Smith, preparing for a prospecting tour as of old, however, was too busy to entertain his self-pity. 'I wish you were more cheerful,' he told his old friend. 'Surely the high opinion entertained of you every where you are known should be a source of gratification to you.'¹⁵⁷ Hainsworth died 13 months later.

Could Smith reflect upon his own life with satisfaction? There is no suggestion in his correspondence that he felt regrets of any kind, but this was a man who had long since learned to conceal his feelings and who possessed a strong faith: heaven awaited. He had time to reminisce with his oldest chum of all, Thomas Monds, whose thumb Smith recalled rescuing from the pincer of a lobster at the Forth River in 1849.¹⁵⁸

'Well old friend,' Monds wrote to him,

¹⁵⁵ Russell Ritchie to Smith 13 March 1897, no. 284, NS234/3/24 (AOT)

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Hainsworth to Smith, undated, NS234/3/25 (AOT)

¹⁵⁷ Smith to Thomas Hainsworth 18 December 1894, no. 388, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁵⁸ Smith to Thomas Monds 12 January 1895, no. 401, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

we are both getting old now and time is getting short with us - we have
both seen many sides of life since we were boys together but our race
will soon be run - and I hope and trust we shall meet when life's troubles
and cares are over - in that better land with all our dear ones - 'for ever
with the Lord'....¹⁵⁹

After more than half a century they still shared friendship and faith. There is no sign that Smith's belief ever faltered but, again, his letters or brief diary entries were unlikely forums for such a topic. Smith experienced less of the poverty and none of the tragedy that tested Hainsworth's faith. Christian zeal burned in his final years:

And all victorious
The Christian cause shall be,
In power glorious,
With all mankind made free.
Made free from error's sorrows,
Made free from hate and strife,
While works of faith shall hallow
The guarded joys of life.¹⁶⁰

As of old, Smith's renewed enthusiasm seems to have spawned a final outpouring of righteous verse, word and deed going hand in hand.¹⁶¹ Other poems of the time, such as 'Tony Brown's Disaster' and 'A Boyish Escapade', are lighthearted, though: Ernest James might not have approved.¹⁶² So far as can be told, Smith was at peace with the past, and absorbed by a present which promised an exciting future. The peak of Tasmania's mining boom must have been a stirring time for the likes of Smith and Wesley, as the latter suggested:

I have been informed you have been out on another prospecting tour. I
do hope you have found another Bischoff, or something equally as

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Monds to Smith 31 December 1894, no. 321, NS234/3/22 (AOT)

¹⁶⁰ 'The Good Fight', *Examiner* 2 May 1895, p.3

¹⁶¹ See also 'We Have Rights to Maintain', *Examiner* 13 May 1895, p.3; and 'Cease from Aggression', 1895, no. 556, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁶² 'A Boyish Escapade', *Examiner* 28 November 1896; 'Tony Brown's Disaster', no. 721, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

good. I can but think how little is known of the mineral deposits in Tasmania particularly between the Bischoff and Zeehan, and from the Cradle Mountain through to Mount Reid and Lyell. I will be surprised if there are not many Lyells, Bischoffs and even Tasmanian's [sic] mines yet in that line of unexplored country.¹⁶³

In October 1895 Smith embarked upon a snowy eleven-day slog up the Forth via the Borradaile Plain to the Mount Pelion copper mine, despite his fear of aggravating the old injury done to his eyes by snow.¹⁶⁴ This was the furthestest south prospecting had ever carried him. Alighting from a steamer at Whirlpool Reach (near the present-day Batman bridge on the lower Tamar River), he showed Leslie the ruins of the Supply mill and the hills where he had undertaken his milling and early geological apprenticeships respectively almost 60 years earlier.¹⁶⁵ He went prospecting with Joseph Harman near Rocky Cape¹⁶⁶ and signed up the now Methuselah-like Crosby for two month-long tours to Middlesex.¹⁶⁷ In February 1897 he gazed upon Mount Bischoff for the last time.¹⁶⁸

The following autumn was occupied with the Mountaineer gold claim near the upper Forth, in which Smith and William Gibson had taken a share. Against the grain of explorer 'heroism', the bush which had absorbed Smith and been the focus of his mythology for so long did not claim him. This did not elongate his legend: death in action, like Livingstone in the jungle, Scott on the ice, Burke and Wills in the desert, confers tremendous staying-power. After examining the Mountaineer site, however, the Philosopher returned home and presided over a tea and public meeting of the Wesleyan Sunday School. On the following day he travelled to Scone near Perth to talk mining with Gibson.¹⁶⁹ On April 23rd Mary received a telegram from Dr Haines at the Perth railway station: 'Mr Smith ill come first train to Coffee Palace Launceston.'¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ W H Wesley to Smith 16 March 1897, no. 289, NS234/3/24 (AOT)

¹⁶⁴ Smith diary entry 6 October 1895 and following, NS234/1/19; and Smith to William Gibson 2 February 1896, no. 704, NS234/2/18 (AOT)

¹⁶⁵ Smith diary entry 18 November 1896, NS234/1/20 (AOT)

¹⁶⁶ Smith diary entry 13 March 1897 and following, NS234/1/21 (AOT)

¹⁶⁷ Smith diary entry 4 December 1896 and following, NS234/1/20; 18 January 1897 and following, NS234/1/21 (AOT)

¹⁶⁸ Smith diary entry 12 February 1897 and following, NS234/1/21 (AOT)

¹⁶⁹ 'Obituary', *North-West Post* 17 June 1897

¹⁷⁰ Dr Haines to Mary Jane Smith, 23 April 1897, no. 483, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

He had suffered a stroke at the start of the return journey.¹⁷¹ Still conscious, Smith had refused Gibson's entreaty that he return to Scone, preferring to be taken by train to that Brisbane Street 'hotel', where Dr L Grey Thompson confirmed the seriousness of the attack. For weeks his condition fluctuated, keeping even the doctor, who had given the family no hope of a recovery, guessing. Occasionally, Smith spoke and seemed to recognise visitors. When Reverend William Law told the patient that prayers were being said for him in church, he responded, 'Oh! *Thank you, thank you.*'¹⁷² Among the well-wishers was Smith's old workmate Crosby, who told Annie 'If your father is able to be talked to please tell him that not an hour has passed during any day since he has been ill but what I have thought of him...'¹⁷³ Although in May Smith rallied enough to order food, and seemed 'bright and intelligent',¹⁷⁴ he remained too ill to be moved or to execute his power of attorney, leaving his wife with the bureaucratic torment of intestacy. In an almost Oedipal twist, the attendant physician, Thompson, would later acquire the mantle of chairman of directors of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, distantly succeeding the mountain's fallen champion. Early in June Smith weakened and the end drew near. Mary appended her husband's diary:

Our darling slept such a sound deep sleep till 12 o'clock today and then, his breathing began to catch a little gradually getting worse till 2 P M....when he woke up and the cruel cough commenced, Annie ran for the Dr, he was soon with us, he said the end had almost come, he was right - our darling, passed to his rest at a $\frac{1}{4}$ to 3 pm passed with just a gentle sigh, at the last.¹⁷⁵

The General Manager of Railways ordered a special carriage to bring Smith's remains home on the train he had worked so hard to win for the north-west. He was born, bred and breathed his last on the verge of the Tamar River; he was lain to rest overlooking

¹⁷¹ Smith's death certificate states as cause of his eventual death 'Heart Disease, Paralysis, Exhaustion' (Death Certificate Register no. 35 Launceston no. 149/1897 [AOT]).

¹⁷² Annie Bertha Smith (Crowther) to Smith family 22 May 1897, NS234/3/24 (AOT)

¹⁷³ W M Crosby to Annie Bertha Smith (Crowther), 24 May 1897, no. 536, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

¹⁷⁴ Annie Bertha Smith (Crowther) to Smith family 29 May 1897, NS234/3/24 (AOT)

the mistress of his bush career, the Forth, some of whose secrets eluded him till the end.

Smith's death produced the expected round of tributes to his service to the colony and his charitable nature. Laura Thompson, wife of the Forth's former Wesleyan minister, spoke of both in a letter to Mary:

I cannot tell you how sorry we are for you and the family and for Tasmania, a public benefactor - but for him after long life - comes heavenly rest - his name will long live in many hearts as well as the annals of his country - Not only now, but many a time we have spoken about 'The Philosophers' [sic] kindness to us during our 3 years term at dear old Forth, not only liberally keeping the Church by presence and means but by many little kind actions to the minister and wife, cases of apples etc which in those days of limited income meant a great deal....¹⁷⁶

Smith's friendship with another beneficiary, Barnard Button, extended back four decades, which had produced 'an amount of sympathy between us on various subjects, such as literature, patriotism, and in most instances politics.'¹⁷⁷ The financial success of Mount Bischoff had given Smith the means to rescue Button in difficult times.¹⁷⁸ 'In this way,' Button wrote, 'many will miss him besides myself.' Smith's old ally Henry Ritchie, still manager of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company after 24 years, passed on to Mary and family an expression of sympathy from the directors, recording

the Board's appreciation of the valuable services rendered by your late husband during the period he held the position of Director of this Company and of the inestimable benefit which he conferred upon the shareholders and the colony generally in the development of its mineral wealth by the discovery of the Mount Bischoff Tin Mine...¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Smith diary entry, 15 June 1897, NS234/1/2 (AOT)

¹⁷⁶ Laura Thompson to Mary Jane Smith 21 June 1897, no. 3H, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

¹⁷⁷ Barnard (W B) Button to Mary Jane Smith 23 June 1897, no. 3G, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

¹⁷⁸ See, for instance, Smith to Henry Button 23 October 1880, NS234/2/6 (AOT).

¹⁷⁹ Henry Ritchie to Mary Jane Smith 5 July 1897, no. 7A, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

The Braddons were in Colombo, en route to Australia on the *S S Himalaya*, when they received the news of Smith's passing. 'I shall always remember that glimpse I had in Launceston of one of our earliest friends in the colony,' Alice Braddon wrote, ' - he looked so peaceful and happy.'¹⁸⁰ Calling Smith 'the greatest of our native born' whose 'service to Tasmania far exceeds that of any other man', Dr John McCall recommended that steps be taken to honour 'the memory of one who will remain to most of the natives of the colony as great a hero as the most distinguished general in our army could be to any British subject.'¹⁸¹ Among some perfunctory obituaries, the *Daily Telegraph* paid special tribute to Smith's character:

Mr James Smith, who was known throughout the colony as 'Philosopher', from the fact of his being endowed with an amount of wisdom rarely given to ordinary mortals, was also known by repute at least, throughout Australia. He was a man of an upright character, whose standard of principle was thought by some to approach the quixotic. He led an exemplary life, and is described by one who was intimately associated with him for a number of years as without a vice. He was kindly, thoughtful, generous almost to a fault, with wide sympathies and broad views, extended by much careful study of men and books.¹⁸²

Labor paper *The Clipper*, on the other hand, took a wry swipe at Smith's beneficence and his nickname:

Why he was called the Philosopher I hardly know. Had he been one skilled in the modern laws or principles of knowledge he would have had Bischoff to himself, and not let it slip away into the hands of others, long grown fat on the result of his remarkable discovery.¹⁸³

These remarks were either flippant or ignorant. No working man could have kept Bischoff to himself. Perhaps the *Clipper* comments echoed the old complaint that Smith

¹⁸⁰ Alice Braddon to Mary Jane Smith 20 August 1897, NS234/5/2 (AOT)

¹⁸¹ 'Late Mr James Smith', *Examiner* 1 July 1897, p.5

¹⁸² 'Death of Mr Jas Smith', *Daily Telegraph* 16 June 1897

¹⁸³ *The Clipper* 19 June 1897, p.3

had squandered his potential fortune, an argument that would haunt Smith beyond the grave. From the tributes emerged a movement to provide for his widow and family. Smith's late marriage left six children from 12 to 22 years of age. The movers were Legislative Councillors H I Rooke, the man who had withdrawn in Smith's favour in 1886, and Charles Hall, Smith's old Mount Bischoff protege. Rooke advocated continuing the £200 annuity to Mary for ten years or at least until the youngest child reached the age of 21 (she would receive a £100 annuity for life). 'I need not point out to you,' Rooke wrote to the treasurer and acting premier, Sir Philip Fysh,

that...Tasmania having so largely benefited by the good work of the late Mr Smith, I feel perfectly sure that not only the Parliament but the people of Tasmania will gladly support the extension of pension to the widow and children of one, if not the greatest, benefactors to this community.¹⁸⁴

Braddon, now the Tasmanian premier, had promised to support the bill, and in the debate

referred to the extraordinary value of Mr Smith's discovery to the colony. There was no other case at all parallel to this. He spoke in eulogistic terms of the late Mr Smith's services, and of his generosity to the whole colony in all his dealings, and said the House should gladly agree to the proposal.¹⁸⁵

Nevertheless, the Mary Jane Smith Pension Bill became law in November 1897 only after reiteration of the quibbles that had anticipated Smith's own pension nearly two decades before. By then the Mount Lyell copper mine, riding the crest of the last Australian mining boom of the nineteenth century, was worth more than £4 million.¹⁸⁶ If anything argued in favour of Smith's contribution to the Tasmanian community it was this.

¹⁸⁴ H I Rooke, 'The Late Mr James Smith', *Daily Telegraph* 6 July 1897

¹⁸⁵ 'Parliament', *Examiner* 12 November 1897

¹⁸⁶ Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, pp.79-80

Decline and fall of Mount Bischoff

The great mine at Mount Bischoff survived its founder, but not with the vigour once expected of it. Although Mount Bischoff would pay more than £2 million in dividends, it would be worked out in only 75 years, the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company being wound up in 1947. The mine probably failed prematurely. Kayser, highly regarded during his residency at Waratah, was Tasmania's best-known mining manager before the advent of Robert Sticht, the metallurgist who became general manager at Mount Lyell in 1897. Kayser was also highly accredited, being appointed to the Tasmanian Board of Examiners for Mining Managers, presenting papers at mining and scientific conferences¹⁸⁷ and serving as president of the Australasian Institute of Mining Engineers.¹⁸⁸ By the 1890s, though, he had grown lazy. Kayser and the company directors must share the blame for complacency in not making the most of the resources at their disposal.

The first signs of trouble, that, as Smith had predicted, the Brown Face would eventually falter, came during the 1890s depression. The abundance of Malaysian tin and other factors dropped the market price as low as one-third of its level in 1888, the mine's most profitable year.¹⁸⁹ Although an adit now opened into daylight at either end of Mount Bischoff, underground prospecting had been neglected on account of the rich surface reserves. Now these were suffused with pyrites which needed special treatment and increased the cost of production.¹⁹⁰ The company began to buy up the properties around its own ground in hope of finding new lodes - the Waratah Alluvial, North

¹⁸⁷ See Ferd Kayser, 'Presidential Address' and 'Mining Timber, its Use and Preservation', *Proceedings of the Australasian Institute of Mining Engineers*, Melbourne, 1898, pp.1-2 and 3-7; plus 'Mount Bischoff'; 'Mount Bischoff Tin Mine, Tasmania'; 'Tin-mining in Tasmania'.

¹⁸⁸ John Reynolds, *Men and Mines: a History of Australian Mining 1788-1971*, p.51, claims Kayser was the first 'non-British' member of this institute to serve as its president.

¹⁸⁹ According to J E Carne, *The Tin-Mining Industry and the Distribution of Ores in New South Wales*, Mineral Resources no. 14, New South Wales Department of Mines, Sydney, 1911, p.365, the 1888 peak for tin on the London market was £170 per ton, compared to £56 at the lowest point in 1896.

¹⁹⁰ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting July 1889, *Examiner* 30 July 1889; half yearly meeting July 1894, *Examiner* 1 August 1894, p.8



The Waratah Falls, site of the Mount Bischoff batteries and mills, show few signs today of their industrialisation more than a century ago.

Bischoff Valley, Stanhope, Don and Wheal Bischoff Company properties were absorbed - but it was a case of too little too late.¹⁹¹

In 1898 the 65-year-old Kayser had eight children ranging from eight to 21 years growing up in a harsh climate. Twice he had had to take his family to Melbourne on account of their health, and he had also endured serious illness himself while at Waratah. His children's health and education were probably the main reasons he now resigned and moved to Launceston.¹⁹² Rather than lose Kayser's services altogether, the directors offered him half his old salary to stay on as general mine manager even at such a great distance from the mine.¹⁹³ This was a big mistake. If ever they needed fresh blood and a vigorous manager on the spot it was then. Efforts to find a competent replacement failed.¹⁹⁴ As the price of tin recovered, the company's dividends stayed flat. Ore production and the quality of ore raised dwindled. Then, in 1906, all three major faces of the mine took a simultaneous sharp decline. In his thirty-second year as mine manager, Kayser was forced to submit his first unsatisfactory report.¹⁹⁵ As Wellington has claimed, the company's reports had failed to acknowledge the decline in profits, exhaustion of the known tin deposits and the problem of treating sulphide ore which it needed to address in order to survive.¹⁹⁶ Kayser now about-faced by predicting that there were only six or seven years' work left in the mine that he had earlier predicted would not be a quarter worked out in his grandchildren's day.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting January 1900, *Examiner* 1 February 1900

¹⁹² Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting July 1898, *Examiner* 30 July 1898. See also meeting of directors, 14 April 1898, Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company minute books, NS911/10 (AOT).

¹⁹³ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting July 1898, *Examiner* 30 July 1898

¹⁹⁴ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting January 1904, *Examiner* 29 January 1904

¹⁹⁵ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting January 1907, *Examiner* 25 January 1907 p.2

¹⁹⁶ H K Wellington, in D I Groves et al, *A Century of Tin Mining at Mount Bischoff, 1871-1971*, Geological Survey Bulletin no. 54, Hobart, 1972, pp.91-2

¹⁹⁷ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting February 1915, *Examiner* 26 February 1915

In 1907 the directors asked the 74-year-old Kayser to resign on account of his age.¹⁹⁸ This was probably a pretext to remove him; the change was long overdue anyway. Kayser's former assistant J D Millen celebrated his promotion to mining manager by condemning the lack of prospecting done by his predecessor and the 'deplorable' state of the machinery.¹⁹⁹ While the reservoirs around Waratah testify to the developmental work carried out by Kayser, the ruins visible today at Mount Bischoff itself and at the Waratah Falls - the 1910 mill, the 1907 power station (designed to improve the efficiency of the plant), the calciner and other debris - signify the mine's decline and the struggle to retrieve the situation at or after Kayser's retirement. By then the state-of-the-art machinery of 1880 had been allowed to gradually run down, failing to meet the changing needs of harder, more complex ores.

Of the Millen regime that succeeded Kayser's, Wellington, admittedly with a modern perspective, wrote: 'This was the first time in which technology played a part in the Mount Bischoff operations.'²⁰⁰ This does not reflect well on Kayser's reputation as a mining engineer. Millen found and opened up new tin deposits in the Happy Valley and North Valley, and by reducing costs he was able to make this low grade ore payable. Under Millen a ton of ore cost 3 shillings, 11.213 pence,²⁰¹ more than 2 shillings cheaper than under Kayser. All the new material was harder and more difficult to crush, which necessitated replacing Kayser's mill with a new, more efficient 20-head battery. Although the 'glory days' of the Mount Bischoff mine never returned, the company survived in a diminished capacity for 40 years after Kayser's retirement.

Expert opinions expressed late in Kayser's career defer to the strength of his early work at Mount Bischoff rather than criticise the complacency that crept in later. In 1904 Donald Clark, author of *Australian Mining and Metallurgy*, referred to Kayser's 'masterful

¹⁹⁸ Special meeting of directors, 13 September 1907, Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company minute books, NS911/13 (AOT); 'Concerning Mining Men: Mount Bischoff Management', *Australian Mining Standard* 25 September 1907

¹⁹⁹ Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company half yearly meeting January 1908, *Examiner* 27 January 1908 p.7

²⁰⁰ Wellington, *A Century of Tin Mining*, p.108

²⁰¹ J E Came, *The Tin-Mining Industry and the Distribution of Ore*, p.356

methods...his extensive grasp of the situation...' and his 'vigorous policy'.²⁰² Clark claimed that, while Kayser's plant had been criticised for being unsuited to local conditions, it was far in advance of Australasian practice at the time of its erection.²⁰³ Clark's knowledge of the Mount Bischoff mine, however, appears mostly drawn from Kayser's own notes. Mining manager of the Anchor tin mine, James Lewis, was contracted to report on the mine management at Mount Bischoff and ways to reduce costs after the 1906 crisis.²⁰⁴ Lewis suggested many improvements, while diplomatically avoiding the conclusion that the mining methods had long been in need of review and overhaul. Rather than criticise the mining manager or the directors who were paying him, Lewis echoed Clark's praise of Kayser's one-time vigour and his once revolutionary concentrating appliances.

The hundreds of pages devoted to Mount Bischoff and to Kayser's methods in Smith's notes suggest that he was almost obsessed with the tin mine for the two decades following his rift with the Mount Bischoff Company.²⁰⁵ In 1889 he told Crosby he was writing a letter about the opening of the Mount Bischoff tin mine.²⁰⁶ A long letter describing the difficulties which Crosby faced, signed 'James Smith' and addressed 'To the Editor' appears in his outward correspondence file for 1890, but it did not see the light of day.²⁰⁷ In 1892 Smith proposed to give a lecture about ore dressing appliances, but had to cancel due to illness.²⁰⁸ The publication of Kayser's 'Mount Bischoff' paper in the *Bankers' Magazine of Australasia* in 1892 while Smith was preparing this, however, seems to have prompted him to again consider a specific response. This was the first of several Kayser papers that claimed that Smith had not identified the tin he found at Mount Bischoff. It was Kayser's criticism of the method of operations which he inherited, though, to which Smith took exception:

²⁰² Donald Clark, *Australian Mining and Metallurgy*, Critchley Parker, Melbourne, 1904, p.185

²⁰³ *ibid*, pp.193-4

²⁰⁴ 'Mt Bischoff Tin Mining Co', *Australian Mining Standard* 22 May 1907 p.481 and 29 May 1907 pp.505-6

²⁰⁵ See NS234/14/2, NS234/14/4, NS234/14/5 (AOT).

²⁰⁶ Smith to Crosby 14 September 1889, no. 723, NS234/2/14 (AOT)

²⁰⁷ James Smith, 'Mining in Tasmania', April? 1890, no. 203, NS234/2/15 (AOT)

²⁰⁸ Smith to Thomas Wright 29 September 1892, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

It appears that in the anxiety to bring the mine into a state to pay dividends everything was overlooked, particularly the system to carry on the work. Good ground, the best known at the time, was being worked regardless of expense; the consequence was very little profit could be made.

At the ore-dressing sheds things were no better than they were at the mine; and although the ore-dresser, considered a good man, had a scheme by which he worked, it was a very poor and expensive one. The hand-jigger and all the old primitive appliances his great grandfather used to work with were here collected, which necessitated a renewal of the whole plant at the earliest possible date.²⁰⁹

Smith took criticism of Crosby's management personally: the latter had, after all, acted on his direct instructions. 'I would like you to call,' Smith wrote to Crosby, 'the first time you are in this direction. I think that I have at last a good opening to write in your favor re the former management of Bischoff...'²¹⁰ Again, nothing about the mine management at Mount Bischoff was published. All that appeared in print were two letters about ore dressing appliances,²¹¹ one of which corrected the thirteen-year old endorsement of German ore dressing written by Smith's anonymous nemesis 'Waratah'.²¹² Once again Smith seems to have preferred education of the public to self-vindication.

Ironically, Smith's correspondence and notes contain no comment about Mount Bischoff's decline during the last years of his life, when, as a close student of his old stamping-ground, he must have recognised the signs. Perhaps this subject was reserved for the hearthside reflections of the old Philosopher and his faithful workmate

²⁰⁹ Kayser, 'Mount Bischoff', pp.345-6

²¹⁰ Smith to W M Crosby 26 November 1892, unnumbered, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

²¹¹ Hear Both Sides (James Smith), 'Ore Dressing Appliances' *Mercury* 10 March 1892; James Smith, 'Ore Dressing Appliances', letter to *Coastal News* 18 October 1892, NS234/2/17 (AOT)

Crosby, who frequently pulled up the river to visit Smith as their working lives drew to a close.

²¹² Waratah, 'Mount Bischoff', *Mercury* 12 December 1879

Conclusion

James Smith holds a unique position in Tasmanian history. His discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff rejuvenated the Tasmanian economy and prompted profound social change. The adoption of his example by prospectors and investors led to a mining boom. This in turn, by building a new population base in the west, and speeding growth in the north-west, changed the balance of power in Tasmania. Not only was the southern stranglehold on parliament loosened, but as the 'Gibraltar of Democracy'¹ the west was instrumental in establishing the union movement and the Labor Party. Roused by King O'Malley, the Labor Party stronghold of the west coast produced the first workingmen (not counting the upwardly mobile Smith himself) in the state parliament, Legislative Councillors James Long (1903-1910) and George Burns (1903-1906), and the first Labor premier, Jack Earle (1909 and 1914-1916).²

As a prospector Smith cuts an equally solitary figure. He was not a consummate businessman hell-bent on building his fortune, but neither does he fit the stereotype of the disenfranchised bushman. No other Tasmanian commanded such a share allotment, such a powerful position in a mining company, or such public esteem as a result of his own mineral exploration. By his own efforts Smith rose from humble beginnings to the status of a gentleman, vindicating the popular idea of self-culture to which he subscribed.

As identified by Large,³ there have been two significant periods of Tasmanian mineral discovery: the first from 1871 to about 1898, and the modern era, beginning in about 1965. The initial era of discovery began with Mount Bischoff and ended with the Mount Lyell copper boom. This quarter-of-a-century period saw a revolution in Tasmania's trade figures, the turnaround between agricultural and mineral wealth being marked by the fact that, while wool represented 40% of the colony's exports in 1875, it

¹ W A Townsley, *Tasmania: from Colony to Statehood: 1803-1945*, St David's Park, Hobart, 1991, p. 214

² Kerry Pink, 'Discovery Changed Course of Our History', *Advocate* ('The History Makers' supplement), 30 August 1983, p.4

accounted for less than 10% in 1901; conversely, minerals, a negligible earner in 1875, represented 60% of Tasmania's export earnings during the Mount Lyell boom in 1901. In that period Tasmanian exports nearly trebled, rising from £1,085,976 (1875) to £2,945,757 (1901).

As Geoffrey Blainey has pointed out, the mining boom changed Tasmania by swinging the centre of economic gravity away from the south.⁴ In 1870 about 52% of Tasmania's population lived in the south-east; by 1901 the figure had dropped to 38%. Parliamentary representation was adjusted accordingly. Whereas in 1870 the south elected 17 of 32 House of Assembly members, in 1903 it had only 13, the north 18 and the west coast four. In 1901 Queenstown (5,051 people) and Zeehan (5,014) were the third and fourth largest Tasmanian towns, and one of every seven Tasmanians lived on the mining fields.⁵ Six of the eleven largest Tasmanian centres depended entirely on mining; a seventh, Burnie, was basically a mining port; while 25,000 people depended directly on mining for employment.⁶ 'The rapid growth of the western mining fields alone,' Blainey claims, 'prevented a mass exodus from the island.'⁷

Since Smith's discovery 131 years ago, mining has remained a major Tasmanian industry. In 1987 the state's 'in-ground' (that is, already mined or identified for future mining) mineral resources were valued at about \$31 billion.⁸ Despite this, the industry has declined since the great boom. Low metal prices and a sharp drop in the number of working mines and new discoveries discouraged investment before World War I, reducing the number of prospectors.⁹ The population of the west coast fell from perhaps 22,000 early in 1900 to 15,000 in 1911, a trend which has gradually continued. The social impact of this decline upon the state can be gauged from the fact that between

³ Ross T Large, 'The Mineral Wealth of Western Tasmania and the Potential of the South West Conservation Area', Tasmanian Chamber of Mines, Hobart, 1987, p.1

⁴ Geoffrey Blainey, 'Population Movements in Tasmania, 1870-1901', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 3, no. 4, June 1954', p.69

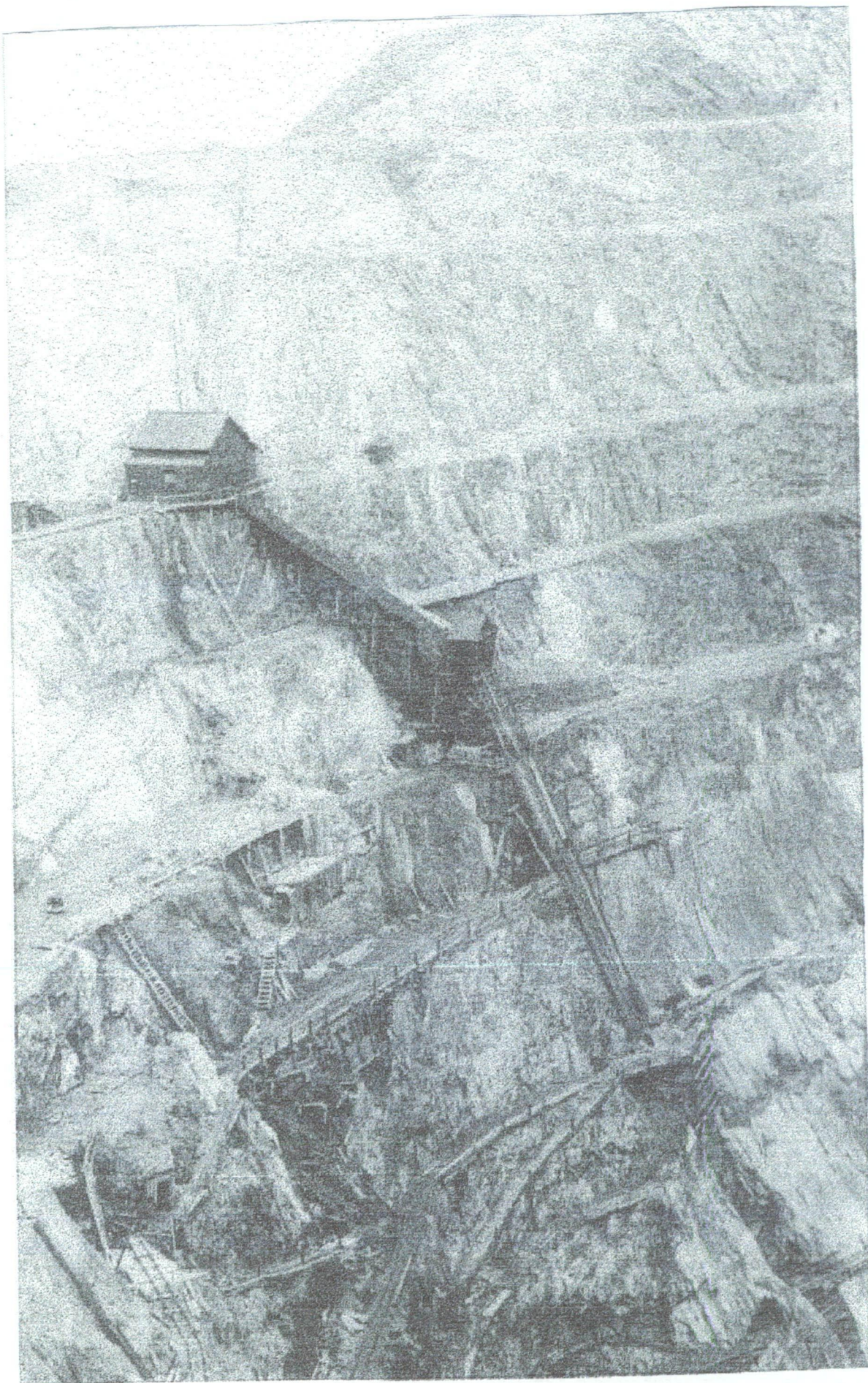
⁵ *ibid*

⁶ *ibid*, p.68

⁷ *ibid*, p.67

⁸ Large, 'The Mineral Wealth of Western Tasmania', p.1

⁹ Blainey, 'The Rise and Decline of the West Coast', *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1956, p.69



The famous Mount Lyell open cut, 1920. (H J King)

1901 and 1927 Tasmania reverted to negative migration, departures exceeding arrivals by 38,000.¹⁰

The era of the big companies which persists today began when metal prices recovered and processing techniques improved in the mid-1930s. Mount Lyell and Rosebery (Electrolytic Zinc) were regenerated, and Renison Associated Tin Mines began operations.¹¹ Whereas formerly companies like Mount Bischoff paid little attention to prospecting while many years of ore lay in sight, the prominent mines of the 1950s began to look to exploration as the key to their future.¹² Today, improved production and metallurgical techniques continue to extend the lives of old mines. While the nineteenth-century concerns Mount Lyell, Rosebery, Renison and Beaconsfield still produce, the future also rests with more recent finds such as Savage River, Hellyer, Kara, Henty and in replenishment of the industry through new discoveries. The Tasmanian mineral industry today still represents about 40% of the state's export earnings.¹³ Today less than 6,000 people (a drop of 12% over the last four years) live on the west coast and less than 1,000 Tasmanians are employed in the mining industry.¹⁴

This industry's decline does not diminish Smith's importance in Tasmanian history. The greater impact of Mount Bischoff was that it reduced reliance on Tasmania's agrarian base, a shift which resonates even today, minerals and metal product manufacturing being easily the island's largest export industry.¹⁵ Nor does the fact that at least half a dozen Tasmanian mines have now exceeded Mount Bischoff's output diminish his achievement. Smith's world was smaller than today's. The physical realm through which he hacked in search of minerals - perhaps one-sixth of the island's land mass - could now be circumnavigated in a day by car or in an hour or two by aeroplane. His nation was Tasmania, not Australia. In keeping with the metaphorical exploration of 'the territory of the mind', he travelled further in his books and newspapers than in the physical world. Occasionally he visited the mainland, but he never left the Australian

¹⁰ Blainey, 'Population Movements', p.70

¹¹ Blainey, 'The Rise and Decline of the West Coast', pp.71-2

¹² *ibid*, p.73

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Tasmanian Statistical Indicators', May 2002, Canberra, 2002, p.37

¹⁴ *ibid*

colonies: he was a British colonist who never saw the motherland with his own eyes or through the electronic eye of the mass media.

Smith never claimed Mount Bischoff was the be-all and end-all of Tasmanian mining. It was the trail-blazer, and because of that its impact upon Tasmania has exceeded that of all other mines, including Mount Lyell. Given the richness of the west coast mining field and the number of mineral deposits, it is fair to suggest that it would have been opened up with or without Smith. Had he not uncovered Mount Bischoff, eventually someone else would have discovered it or one of the other important mineral deposits. Was it not simply a matter of when or where? It could be argued, for instance, that with better luck Charles Gould would have discovered gold and copper near Mount Lyell in 1862, placing his name where Smith's now stands and prompting the Mount Lyell copper boom, to Tasmania's inestimable benefit, decades earlier.

There is little doubt that without James Smith Tasmania would still have a significant mining industry today. How much longer it might have taken to develop, however, and with what economic and social damage to the state in the interim, can only be guessed. The Zeehan deposits probably would not have been found in 1882, nor the Mount Lyell in 1883, without the impetus for exploration provided by Mount Bischoff. Even the opening of the Savage River iron ore deposits in 1967 and Que River in 1981 might have been delayed.

Luck, arguably, plays a part in every important mineral discovery. Comparative novices, the McDonough brothers and Steve Karlson, found gold where a trained geologist, Charles Gould, had reported nothing of value. Any number of factors could explain Gould's 'failure' - from the nature of his mission in the Linda Valley (Was he actually looking for gold?) to the later removal of obstructive vegetation. To ascribe luck to one venture and not to another can only be speculation.

It was not luck so much as enterprise and vision that caused Smith to make the first great discovery in the western sector. He alone had clawed his way through the north-western mountains year after year, developing his expertise as a prospector at financial and physical risk; he alone had the prospector's intuition about tackling the

¹⁵ *ibid*

headwaters of the Arthur River and the knowhow to find tin in what, on close examination, he recognised as unpromising country for gold. It was an investment in time and study that paid off; few others, if any, possessed Smith's dedication and were prepared to make those sacrifices. Not S B Emmett. George Renison Bell was as dedicated, but was restricted by family commitments and his own impractical ways. T B Moore was highly motivated but perhaps lacked Smith's expertise as a prospector. Had Moore pegged the Mount Lyell Iron Blow when he had the chance in November 1883, however, instead of leaving it to the McDonough brothers and Karlson,¹⁶ perhaps his legend would now rival Smith's.

Only a few names can be raised to challenge Smith's uniqueness as a prospector. Since the western Tamar was physically less challenging than Mount Bischoff, the only comparison possible between Smith and the Dally brothers of Beaconsfield fame is a financial one made by banking up their fully realised shares against the potential value of Smith's shares, most of which he relinquished at a small profit. In June 1877 William and David Dally uncapped the Tasmania Reef on the eastern slope of Cabbage Tree Hill. Four months later this pair and their three brothers sold their claim to the Tasmania Gold Mining and Quartz Crushing Company for £15,000 and a one-tenth share. According to Coultman Smith,¹⁷ David Dally built 64 houses (Smith owned 23 at his death), including two mansions, with this fortune, subsequently living off his investments. On an individual basis, however, the Dally brothers' fortune does not compare to Smith's £1,500 and 4,400 (37% of) shares in the Mount Bischoff Tin Mining Company, which paid much greater dividends than the gold company. Smith's dividends alone, had his shares never been surrendered, would have exceeded all those paid by the Tasmania mine.

James Crotty made more money and achieved greater power than James Smith. He arrived on the Mount Lyell field as a 40-year-old itinerant digger in 1884 and died a mining magnate 14 years later with an estate valued, even after a sudden decline in

¹⁶ Ian McShane, *T B Moore - a Bushman of Learning*, B A (Hons) thesis, University of Tasmania, 1982, pp.54-5

¹⁷ Coultman Smith, *Town With a History: Beaconsfield Tasmania*, Beaconsfield Museum Committee, 1978, p.26

Mount Lyell shares, at £160,000.¹⁸ The key to Crotty's success, according to Blainey, was that

he had faith, perseverance, mining knowledge, and cunning, that rare mixture of qualities which, spiced with luck, brings mining success.

Unlike many shy bushmen he did not shudder at the sight of a cable tram or a crowded street. He was equally at ease cooking bacon on a camp-fire or mingling with the silk hats and frock-coats in fashionable London hotels.¹⁹

How did Smith measure up? Clearly he was not as well-equipped as Crotty to be a mining magnate. For all Smith's own faith, perseverance and mining knowledge, he was not a bona fide businessman. No doubt he preferred the camp-fire or the hearth in his study to the radiance of fashionable society. That is as far as any comparison can be extended between the two prospectors, since Crotty's gain bears no testament to his prospecting skills: he did not discover the Mount Lyell Iron Blow. He was in the right place at the right time to buy for £20 Mick McDonough's share which, according to Blainey,²⁰ would have been worth £1,500,000 13 years later.

Among Tasmanian mining figures Smith commands the greatest mythology, his story having often been misappropriated to reinforce the comfortable cliché of the digger as a marginalised class victim. Ironically, Smith was never a victim. He was master of his destiny throughout his career. He did not prospect in Tasmania until he had the backing of property, which remained his security for the rest of his life. Far from being a class victim, he usurped the class structure by rising from obscurity as the child of ex-convicts to affluence, to a position of reverence possibly unequalled in Tasmanian history. Nevertheless, images have proliferated of Smith as a hapless hermit or a solitary fanatic, as if prospectors are, by definition, losers, never winners.

Geoffrey Serle, in his biography of John Monash, records that for 43 years an annual pilgrimage was made to Monash's grave or statue in Melbourne. 'Perhaps Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Lawson are the only Australians to have been annually

¹⁸ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Peaks of Lyell*, Melbourne University Press, 1954, p.124

¹⁹ *ibid*, p.125

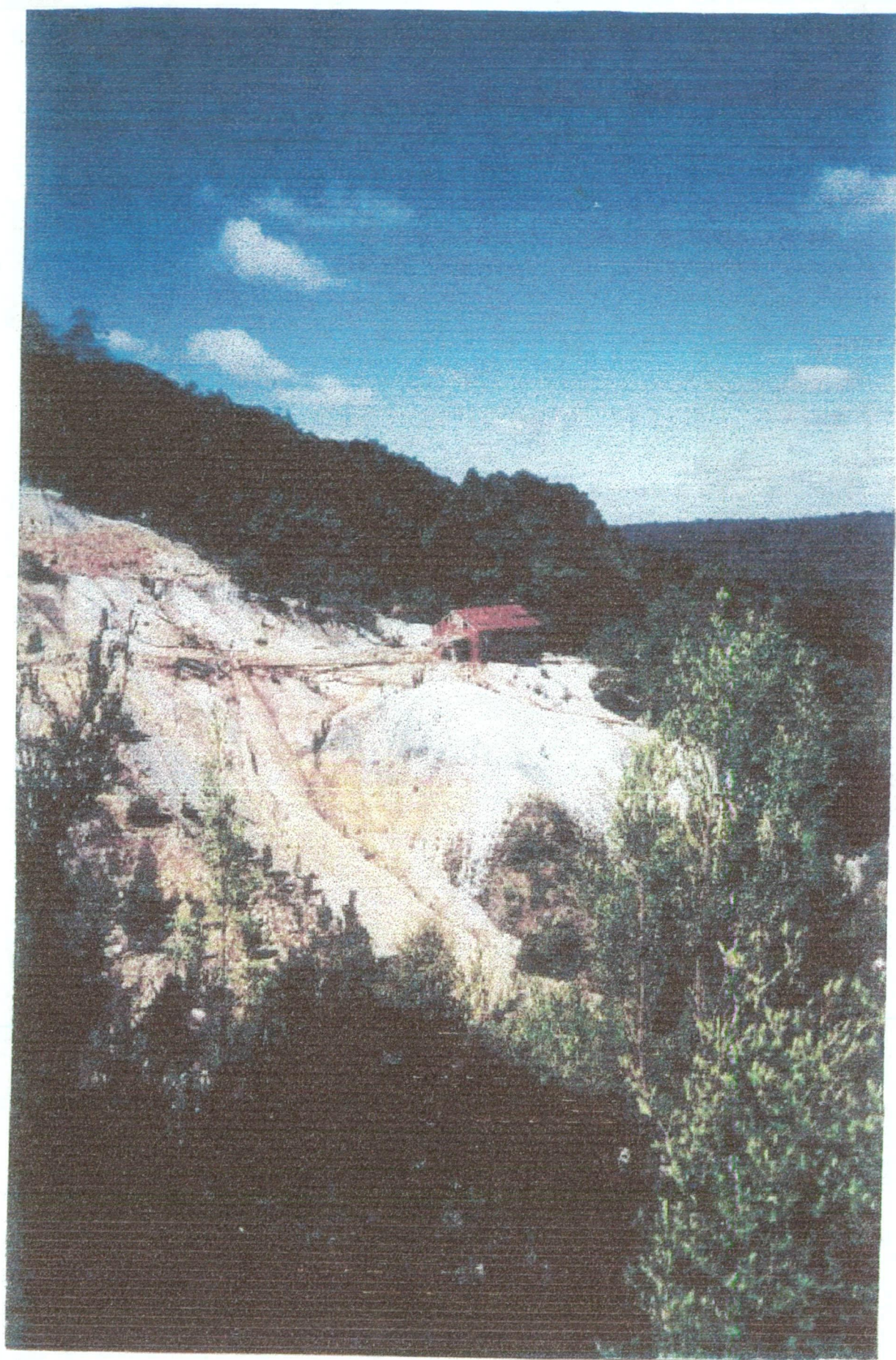
commemorated for a longer term,' Serle speculates.²¹ Yet in the backwoods of north-western Tasmania an annual pilgrimage has been made to the grave of Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain every year since 1954 (the ceremony was first performed in 1938), signalling the ascent of a new kind of 'hero'. Most Australians have never heard of Weindorfer. North-western Tasmania is proud of its one-time prime minister Joe Lyons, its chief explorer Henry Hellyer and Smith, but none of them is as charismatic as Weindorfer, who is regarded almost as a martyr to the establishment of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. A few of Weindorfer's acquaintances still help perpetuate his memory, and the beauty and 'wilderness' values of Tasmania's heavily patronised Wilderness World Heritage Area testify to his vision. Weindorfer is probably better-known today than in his own lifetime.

Smith, on the other hand, has no disciples and no monument other than the lonely, scarred face of Mount Bischoff. (The Penguin silver mine and its seaside companion the Neptune are marked by a garden - Lings Oasis - and an abandoned abattoir respectively.) Even though the mining world of today has grown bigger and more sophisticated, Smith's fame has faded in the century since his death. This can be explained partly by the closure of the Mount Bischoff mine half a century ago and the overall decline in the importance of the mining industry. (The present writer was surprised three years ago to discover that an experienced journalist on the staff of the *Burnie Advocate* newspaper had not heard of Smith nor even of Mount Bischoff, which stands about 50 kilometres from that paper's production office.) The bushman armed with pick and panning dish has long since given way to less than romantic state-of-the-art geophysical and geochemical mineral exploration capable of establishing in seconds a discovery he might have chipped away at for years. There are very few prospectors today. Not only that, but mining is no longer perceived as the unalloyed good it was once considered to be, as Blainey explains:

For more than a century the miner had been seen as a benefactor of
Australia. He brought it wealth, he helped to give it a high standard of

²⁰ *ibid*, p.31

²¹ Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: a Biography*, Melbourne University Press, 1982, p.529



Lone miner's hut on the once famous White Face of Mount Bischoff, 1996.

living, he provided jobs and especially so during the depressions, he was the spur to the fastest period of migration the country had seen, and he opened up regions which otherwise would be 'backward'.

In the space of two decades, however, the 'honoured' names of prospector 'heroes' lost some of their sheen:

The discoverers of mines - and mines themselves - were in danger of being toppled from the national pedestal by an earthquake in public opinion....The new conservation movement had become a crusade, almost a rush; and mining was perhaps its main target.²²

'Ecology' had replaced 'economy' as the key term in the mining lexicon. Many people now regard all mining as environmental vandalism. Increasing cynicism about globalisation and multi-national companies, the rise of the Aboriginal land rights movement and passionate opposition to uranium extraction in an age of nuclear accidents and terrorism have also played a part in tarnishing the industry's image.

Occasionally, however, the old 'surrogate warriors'²³ of Smith's generation get a call-up. As late as 1993 there was a flurry of the familiar Victorian values as an effort was made to extend the Anzac legend to later battles in order to preserve it.²⁴ The occasion, as Davison records, was the death of World War II 'hero' Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, which prompted an outpouring about modern Australia's

need of real heroes...Sir Edward's values have proved a source of inspiration to more than one generation, yet few modern Australians could stand alongside him. The man was a natural hero, raised on ideas and principles and committed to old fashioned concepts like faith and duty...²⁵

²² Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: a History of Australian Mining*, Melbourne University Press, 1978 (originally published 1963), p.372

²³ Graeme Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, New South Wales, 2000, p.23

²⁴ *ibid*, p.22

²⁵ article in the Melbourne Age newspaper; cited by Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, pp.20-1

The similarities to Smith's legend are unmistakable. Dunlop was 'simultaneously tough yet tender, patriotic yet ecumenical...[a]...man of action and a thinker.'²⁶ Davison states that 'like most of his generation [and like Smith] Dunlop had been taught to worship, and in turn emulate, heroes.'²⁷ Smith and Dunlop, born 80 years apart, were weaned on the same style of heroic exemplar. In Smith's case it probably began with Wellington and Nelson, followed in middle age by his own reading about the likes of Sir John Franklin, Livingstone, Washington and Stanley. Clive of India was probably common to Smith's pantheon and Dunlop's. As a child, 'Weary' also learned about Victorian heroes such as Gordon of Khartoum and Robert O'Hara Burke, plus 'the romantic chivalry of the Anzacs',²⁸ which had probably superseded the similarly mythologised Charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaklava, in Smith's time.

Just as Smith does not meet the stereotype of the Australian bushman, however, ultimately his stoic British persona does not meet the modern formula for heroism. In contrast to Victorian Britain and its colonies, modern Australian egalitarianism, perhaps reflecting the collective 'digger' experience of Gallipoli, does not deal in saints.²⁹ 'Mates' are not saints. 'Not being a saint is apparently a precondition for becoming a national hero,' Davison says of Dunlop's eulogies.

What makes a good or brave or clever person into a hero is not the absence of weakness or wrong-doing....Nor is courage or moral force sufficient in itself to make a hero, at least not a popular or national one. What counts is the hero's capacity to present a personal resolution of values and interests we feel to be a contradiction.³⁰

Livingstone was certainly depicted as a saint. Stanley made only the slightest concession to the 'complexity' of his character, granting that 'he is not an angel, but he approaches to that being as near as the nature of a living man will allow...'³¹ Other than

²⁶ Davison, *The Use and Abuse of Australian History*, p.30

²⁷ *ibid*, p.31

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ *ibid*, pp.31-3

³⁰ *ibid*, p.31

³¹ Henry M Stanley, *How I Found Livingstone: Travels, Adventures, and Discoveries in Central Africa*, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, London, 1890, pp.348 and 351

Smith's unwitting misguidance of silver investors, practically the only credible contemporary criticism of him was that he was excessively generous.

Yet the modern Tasmanian conservation movement features saints, men (and women, presumably) willing to die for the environmental cause. The rise of this phenomenon just as Livingstone was finally being debunked in 1973,³² tempts the question as to whether a passing of the 'baton' took place, as if, perhaps, conservationists are the modern version of the charismatic Victorian explorer, global crusaders for our collective future.

The Hydro-Electric Commission's proposal to flood Lake Pedder in order to generate electricity, followed by the debate over proposed mining at Precipitous Bluff on the south coast,³³ galvanised a new spirit in Tasmanian conservation in the 1960s and early 1970s. In the previous decade, the lake had been included in a national park that bore its name. National park gazettal, however, had never been an obstacle to 'progress', as Norm Sanders explained in *A Time to Care*:

The land is only made a park [in Tasmania] if nobody else wants it - the 'residual approach'. Once it is a park, developers often lobby to change the boundaries or even have the whole park revoked.³⁴

On this point the 'young Turks' who would soon form the Tasmanian Wilderness Society differed from the 'old guard' of Tasmanian conservation, an example of whom was Fred Smithies, a stalwart of the old Cradle Mountain Reserve Board and Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park Board over half a century. As one of the pioneers of this reserve, established in 1922, Smithies had criticised the destructive activities of miners and hunters,³⁵ yet in his old age he spoke out in favour of the flooding of Lake Pedder on the 'bigger, better and more accessible' principle:

³² Tim Jeal, *Livingstone*, Heinemann, London, 1973

³³ Helen Gee and Janet Fenton (eds.), *The South West Book: a Tasmanian Wilderness*, Australian Conservation Foundation, Hawthorn, Victoria, 1978, pp.191-203, 235-50; Peter Thompson, *Bob Brown of the Franklin River*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp.25 and 63

³⁴ Norm Sanders and Chris Bell, *A Time to Care: Tasmania's Endangered Wilderness*, 1980, p.34

³⁵ 'Australian Natives: Launceston Social', *Examiner?*, 1921?, clipping in Fred Smithies file, NS573/1/21 (AOT)

Well I think [the flooded] Lake Pedder has been infinitely improved by what has been done there....Lake Pedder was certainly a bright jewel in our scenery, but it was an isolated jewel seen by very few people....I think it's infinitely improved and accessible. You can drive your car right into the lake if you want to....I think the Hydro has done a great job....³⁶

Communication between those who had seen Lake Pedder and those who had not, according to Max Angus, was 'difficult'.³⁷ Smithies had not seen the original lake: ironically, in the same interview he lamented the cost of tourism to the solitude and beauty of the Cradle Mountain area, which he knew intimately. Smithies, admittedly, was 91 years old when he made these comments, but this was the 'progress' mentality that had wanted to put a road through the full length of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park³⁸ and had allowed the excision from that park of land wanted by mining companies (the Wolfram mine near Mount Oakleigh continued to work as late as the 1980s).³⁹ These values were out of step with the 'new breed' of conservationist, as epitomised by the late Olegas Truchanas (he died in 1972), who valued 'wilderness' intrinsically, untouched, rather than subordinating it to economic progress.

Smithies is and will continue to be remembered as a staunch conservationist. If proof is needed, go back four decades from his Lake Pedder comments to when he and three Launceston friends bought up virgin bushland in the Tasmanian highlands containing a beautiful stand of King Billy pine, in order to save it from sawmillers.⁴⁰ Already most of it had once been signed away to be logged. The agreement had allowed sawmills to be erected, tramways, fences, watercourses, dams and even

³⁶ Fred Smithies, 'Interview with Frederick Smithies, O B E, recorded by M Bryant, Archives Office, at the "Grange", St Leonards on the 15th June, 1977', NS573/3/3 (AOT)

³⁷ Max Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas*, Olegas Truchanas Publication Committee, Hobart, 1975, p.37

³⁸ minutes of Cradle Mountain Reserve Board 20 June 1946, AA595/1 (AOT)

³⁹ Nic Haygarth, *A View to Cradle: a History of Tasmania's Forth River High Country*, Canberra, 1998, pp.176-7

⁴⁰ G J F Bergmann, *Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain*, Hobart, 1959, p.64; Margaret Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain: the Story of Gustav Weindorfer*, Regal, Launceston, 1987, p.110

accommodation houses for the workers to be built and animals to be grazed where the King Billy pines 'and other marketable timber' then stood.⁴¹

The names of these 'environmental vandals'? One was Gustav Weindorfer, the same name invoked in a 1960 letter to Scenery Preservation Board secretary Michael Sharland, protesting against the proposed road to Dove Lake inside the northern entrance of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. 'This is a plea,' wrote Joe Picone,

to keep Tasmania's largest National Park in its primitive state so that future generations may still enjoy that sense of independence that mountain walking brings, far from mundane civilized living. This, I believe, would have been Gustav Weindorfer's sentiments as regards the 'Waldheim' region.⁴²

Picone was partly right. Weindorfer did not speak of building a road to Dove Lake: he wanted it to go much further, up onto the Cradle Plateau.⁴³ The ascent of Cradle Mountain would then have been primed to become a one-hour-return boulder-hop for coach-loads of sprightly pensioners.

The point of this exercise is not to belittle conservation or conservationists, whose goals are wholly admirable, but to demonstrate that Tasmanian conservationists have mythologised as much as Victorian hagiographers did: have they been any more careful with their sainthoods? As Victorian Arctic hero Sir John Franklin has been revised as the 'last of the bumbleheads',⁴⁴ perhaps a perjorative tag awaits closer examination of Weindorfer. Bush predecessors of the Greens have been condemned or eulogised as it suited without the dignity of permitting them their context. James Smith, Gustav Weindorfer and many others loved the bush, but at a time when 'wilderness' bore Biblical significance and the ideas of the Romantics and Transcendentalists had not

⁴¹ See agreement between Weindorfer, Ronald Smith and Henry 14 December 1920, NS234/9/1 (AOT). The agreement was cancelled in June 1921 (see Henry to Smith 3 June 1921) because the 'bottom fell out of the timber market completely'.

⁴² Joe Picone to Michael Sharland 30 March 1960, AA580/1 (AOT)

⁴³ Ronald Smith, 'Trip to Cradle Mountain Mr and Mrs Weindorfer and R E Smith 27 Dec 1909 to 11 January 1910', held by Charles Smith, Launceston

⁴⁴ Roderic Owen, *The Fate of Franklin*, Hutchinson of Australia, Melbourne, 1978, p.17

penetrated Tasmania's struggle for prosperity, ultimately financial demands ruled their lives.

During the Gordon-Below-Franklin-Dam blockade, which prevented the building of the dam in 1983, it was a commonly held belief among protestors that only 'Greenies' had an objective opinion of the scheme (since, unlike the Tasmanian government, the Hydro-Electric Commission and those who might secure work as a result of the dam being built, they had no pecuniary interest in the south-west region), so they were purported to be the first Tasmanians to 'love the land'.⁴⁵ This was not a new claim. In 1938, for instance, the attorney-general E J Ogilvie wrote of Weindorfer,

It was an unfortunate fact that Tasmanians did not appreciate their State's natural gifts and it had been left to an adopted Australian to open up one of the finest mountain areas in the State.⁴⁶

Weindorfer can be seen to belong to a tradition of the ascetic Tasmanian bushman, a man of sterling integrity who, in legend at least, places principle before mammon. Despite the absence of explorers to rate with the Victorian greats, the bush monastic 'type', with models such as Henry Thoreau and, ultimately, perhaps, Christ or John the Baptist, preaching in (or about) the wilderness, has a long tradition in the island state. A detailed examination of this topic would probably include such figures as the surveyors Henry Hellyer (the man who bushman 'Sandy' McKay said would haunt the Surrey Hills after his death, like Patrick White's Voss⁴⁷), Charles Sprent⁴⁸ and James Calder;⁴⁹ 'missionary' George Robinson;⁵⁰ explorer Jorgen Jorgensen;⁵¹ governor and

⁴⁵ For discussion of this issue, see Richard Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty: History of the Gordon River Country*, Greenhouse, Richmond, Victoria, 1985, pp.68-70, 92-3; Simon Cubit, *Snarers and Cattlemen of the Mersey High Country*, Regal, Launceston, 1987, pp.91-4; James Boyce, 'Journeying Home: a New Look at the British Invasion of Van Diemen's Land: 1803-1823', *Island*, Autumn 1996, pp.56-8.

⁴⁶ Bergman, *Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain*, p.65, citing the *Advocate* 15 March 1938

⁴⁷ N J B Plomley (ed.), *Friendly Mission: the Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson, 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 1966, 17 August 1830, p.200

⁴⁸ C J Binks, *Explorers of Western Tasmania*, Mary Fisher Bookshop, Launceston, 1980, pp.204-14

⁴⁹ See John B Thwaites, 'James Erskine Calder (1808-74)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography (A D B)*, vol. 1, Melbourne University Press, 1966, pp.193-4.

⁵⁰ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*

Arctic explorer Sir John Franklin⁵²; Gordonvale and Adamsfield 'hermits' Ernie Bond⁵³ and Stan Gurney⁵⁴ respectively; bushmen Henry Judd,⁵⁵ T B Moore⁵⁶ and Paddy Hartnett,⁵⁷ and Port Davey stalwart Denny King.⁵⁸ Smith's reputed disdain of money gives him 'V I P' membership. This is not the forum for such a rich subject, but even a superficial comparison between Smith and conservationist icons Gustav Weindorfer, Olegas Truchanas and (now Greens leader) Bob Brown, shows remarkable similarities in the ways they have been perceived.

In Weindorfer's case, love of the land has been couched principally in his determination to protect Cradle Mountain in a national park and in his reverence for trees, in particular, in his preservation of the King Billy pine forest which now bears his name. The homily is often cited of his reprimand to the local bushman who had chopped down a King Billy near the chalet site and burned a 'kerosene bush' (*Richea scoparia*).⁵⁹ Another has Weindorfer revering a fallen pine which 'was growing in this valley before Our Lord came down to earth'.⁶⁰

Less acknowledgement has been made of his (now politically incorrect) occasional prospecting,⁶¹ his snaring for food and extra cash⁶² and the sawmilling agreement, which would have logged most of what is now known as Weindorfers Forest

⁵¹ Dan Sprod, *The Usurper: Jorgen Jorgenson and His Turbulent Life in Iceland and Van Diemen's Land 1780-1841*, Blubber Head, Sandy Bay, Tasmania, 2001

⁵² Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Sir John Franklin in Tasmania, 1837-43*, Melbourne, 1949; Owen, *The Fate of Franklin*

⁵³ Jeanette Cox, 'To the Denison Range and Adamsfield', *Tasmanian Tramp*, no. 5, December 1936, pp.31-6; 'Gordonvale', *Tasmanian Tramp*, no. 11, December 1953, p.3; Terry Woodward, 'Recollections of Gordonvale', *Tasmanian Tramp*, no. 23, June 1979, pp.154-9

⁵⁴ David Lees, 'The Count of Adamsfield', *Tasmanian Tramp*, no. 16, December 1963, pp.66-7; Kathleen, Ralph and Timothy Gowlland, *Adamsfield: the Town That Lived and Died*, Devonport, 1973

⁵⁵ Ralph and Kathleen Gowlland, *Trampled Wilderness: the History of South-West Tasmania*, Devonport, 1976, pp.65-8, 85 and 152

⁵⁶ See Binks, *Explorers*, pp.219-34; and Ian McShane, *T B Moore*.

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Gowlland, *Trampled Wilderness*, pp.140-3.

⁵⁸ Christobel Mattingley, *King of the Wilderness: the Life of Denny King*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 2001

⁵⁹ Bergmann, *Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain*, pp.62-3; Giordano, *A Man and a Mountain*, pp.37 and 93; Sally Schnackenberg, *Kate Weindorfer: the Woman Behind the Man and the Mountain*, Regal, Launceston, 1995, p.33

⁶⁰ J G Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian: Frederick Smithies, O B E, Explorer: Mountaineer, Photographer*, Regal, Launceston, undated, p.69

⁶¹ See Gustav Weindorfer diaries, NS234/27/1 (AOT).

⁶² See, for instance, Ronald Smith to Weindorfer 11 July 1918, NS234/19/1 (AOT).

(excluding only the four acres around Waldheim). Perhaps Weindorfer, in retrospect, felt relieved that the cull had not taken place; perhaps, with that lucky opportunity for hindsight, he would have instead answered to his mythological status by preserving the forest. His comparatively early death robbed history of resolution of this issue.

As Weindorfer had been depicted as a refugee of German militarism, the novice 'explorer' and glorious wilderness photographer Truchanas was a Lithuanian refugee from Soviet annexation. Truchanas (as noted in Chapter 1) was also activated by the explorer's love of discovery. Angus's description of Truchanas's solo kayak trips invoke the type of awe that Smith's lone expeditions into the wilderness apparently did a century before:

A man who achieves eminence in any field stands apart from his fellows. If that field involves the singlehanded exploration of wilderness, with journeys of the most arduous and exceptional kind, he is likely to be set further apart. A certain air of mystery attaches to him. He is seen as a solitary man - a loner.⁶³

This is Victorian-era explorer talk. The subject of the deliberation above could easily have been Smith, yet Truchanas, we are told, was a man who remained untainted by the exploitative pioneering traditions which still held sway in Australia, just as Weindorfer brought, in Ogilvie's view, the 'un-Tasmanian' prescience of a more enlightened Europe to Tasmania, an island community perhaps still blighted in its thinking by its convict shame:

his name [Truchanas] was known...to a host of Tasmanians who sensed that here was a man who could tell them more about their unknown wilderness than almost anyone before him. People were not slow to see that he differed from the remembered images of our sturdy pioneers whose feats as axemen, roadbuilders, explorers or mining prospectors were formidable, but whose love for the land was little or none.⁶⁴

⁶³ Angus, *The World Of Olegas Truchanas*, p.14

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p.15

Did Truchanas sense something about south-west Tasmania that seasoned bushwalkers like Jack Thwaites, the 'King of the Wilderness', Denny King, or Henry Judd, almost a century earlier, could not? Despite his monasticism, Smith does not excite the religious awe, the mysticism or 'otherness' that marks the philosopher born outside the complacent paradise of Tasmania, which remains a frightened beachhead on the edge of 'uncivilised' mother earth. According to this philosophy, Smith was a conqueror; but Weindorfer, Truchanas and Brown were or are stewards of the wilderness.⁶⁵ Like Boyd's George Fairweather Moonlight and Patrick White's Voss, Weindorfer and Truchanas had appropriate, almost sacrificial deaths. Weindorfer died alone in Cradle Valley, and was enshrined in view of the peak in defence of which he was virtually martyred.⁶⁶ Max Angus describes Truchanas's death pose in crucifixional terms, stretched across a fallen pillar of the rainforest he likewise championed:

Thrown against the sunken tree that lay across the river, his body had almost embraced it, his arms outstretched across its black and glistening surface.

He had been destroyed, with Biblical simplicity, by two of the elements: fire and water. Five years had passed between their brief and terrible visits. He had perished in the river he sought to save. Classical mythology affords no stronger example of the drama of the incorruptible man who passes into legend.⁶⁷

Truchanas was a minister of nature's kingdom:

He spoke of the great beauty of the wilderness, and of its primal splendour. He spoke modestly and simply. The magic of the South-West was his theme. Those who heard him came under his spell. Here, then, was the man who was to become a prime force in people's minds

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p.51

⁶⁶ See, for instance, Bergmann, *Gustav Weindorfer of Cradle Mountain*, pp.62-3; and Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian*, pp.66-9.

⁶⁷ Angus, *The World of Olegas Truchanas*, p.55

to resist the alienation of it. He had, mentally and physically, everything required for the arduous and compelling role he finally chose.⁶⁸

Tasmania's living Green icon, Bob Brown, has borne some of the hallmarks of his predecessors. Richard Flanagan calls Brown 'Gandhi-like';⁶⁹ Thompson refers to him as 'quite puritan'.⁷⁰ James McQueen recalled interviewing Gordon-Below-Franklin Dam blockaders about Brown at Strahan in 1983:

He appeared to them...as a distant, almost exotic figure; some of them regarded him with an almost religious awe. This is no surprise; there is an element of the priestly about him.⁷¹

Peter Thompson's Brown, like Smith, is a philosopher in his secluded cabin, scratching draft upon draft of his hypothesis, until forced by duty or conscience into the broader world of public debate and, as was Smith, into parliament. Like the post-Bischoff Philosopher, the 'monastic' Brown frequently gives up his savings to worthwhile causes, embarrassed by his accumulation of mammon:

Money, emotional security, and property had value to the extent that they freed one to carry on the battle.⁷²

In the spirit of Thoreau, who wrote that the wilderness walker should be prepared 'never to return...ready to leave mother and father...and never see them again',⁷³ free of debts and obligations, so Brown recorded in his diary:

More than before I am to go it alone, leaving the influence of my beloved family, the shelter offered by my friends, the affluent future I might in some other less hypocritical world have had.⁷⁴

Like Smith also, Brown has no dependants to encumber his tilt with death. Thus he can without hesitation place his life in danger in the pursuit of a greater good.⁷⁵ As

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.16

⁶⁹ Flanagan, *A Terrible Beauty*, p.94

⁷⁰ Thompson, *Bob Brown of the Franklin River*, p.120

⁷¹ James McQueen, *The Franklin: Not Just a River*, Penguin, Ringwood, Victoria, 1983, p.20

⁷² Thompson, *Bob Brown of the Franklin River*, p.78

⁷³ Henry Thoreau, 'Walking', *The Portable Thoreau*, (ed. Carl Bode), Penguin, New York, 1987, p.593

⁷⁴ Thompson, *Bob Brown of the Franklin River*, p.78

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p.80

the legendary Smith battles flooded streams in search of a bequest to Tasmania, Brown edifies the camera that will help save the Franklin River by offering himself up to 'terrifying' rapids, a red-blooded challenge of white water.⁷⁶ As with Smith, with Brown the question of altruism hangs heavy:

In his own view he sees himself as a selfish man. But his kind of selfishness may seem like altruism to others. What then, is altruism? Oh, he says, altruism is just a kind of selfishness that benefits other people.⁷⁷

What a wilderness club they make: the 'hermit' of Cradle Mountain, the lone kayaker on the Gordon River, the doctor at the foot of Drys Bluff and the Philosopher of Mount Bischoff. Upon them all, perhaps, falls the shadow of the Thoreau of Walden Pond.

Smith is dusted off regularly for an appearance in the local press,⁷⁸ usually to celebrate a milestone in the mining industry, but, despite the *deja vu* visited above, with each passing year he seems more the prisoner of a bygone age. He is remembered by Philosopher Street in Launceston, Smith Streets in several towns, Smiths Plain under Black Bluff and Philosopher Falls near Mount Bischoff. The Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston holds a portrait of him and the silver salver presented to him by Governor Weld in 1878. The West Coast Pioneers' Museum in Zeehan displays Smith's prospecting dish, along with a model of Kayser's patented ore dressing machinery and a short history of the Mount Bischoff mine.

Waratah, by contrast, is off the tourist map. The devastated 'mountain of tin' overlooks the charred remains of Kayser's 1910 mill, the calciner, a model of Kayser's electric lighting plant and some old milling equipment which has been turned into children's playground apparatus.

In 1891 'East Devon' lamented that the bustling mining town contained no public recognition of its founder, who had 'roused the whole colony out of its chronic

⁷⁶ *ibid*

⁷⁷ McQueen, *The Franklin: Not Just a River*, p.21

⁷⁸ See, for instance, Pink, 'Discovery Changed Course of Our History'; 'Philosopher Smith Not a Typical Prospector', *Advocate* ('Mount Lyell: A Century of Copper' supplement) 22 March 1993, p.9; 'The Tin Man: Tasmania's Greatest Benefactor', *Advocate* 14 June 1997, pp.24 and 26.

lethargy'.⁷⁹ Although Smith's portrait hangs in the public hall, and a small museum records Waratah's 'glory days', little has changed today. It is sad that this historical town contains no substantial recognition of its founder or of almost 140 years of mining in the Waratah district. Smith's impressive headstone appears to be the only free-standing public monument ever erected in memory of the man who was a hero in an era of mass heroic commemoration.

Ironically, as James Smith's legend fades in his native state, it is now commemorated nationally. The Australian Mining Hall of Fame at Kalgoorlie, opened in 2001, contains a display depicting Smith in his simple two-room hut at Westwood, surrounded by his books, deep in the contemplation that won him the nickname Philosopher.

⁷⁹ 'East Devon', "Philosopher" Smith and Bischoff, *North Coast Standard* 10 January 1891

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Appendix: James Smith's Published Poems

(in chronological order)

ORIGINAL

Written on hearing of the Death of the late Mr A J Evelyn, formerly Editor of the Illustrated Sydney News.

Kind friendship sheds a silent tear
 To consecrate a poet's clay,
In grief to think that one so dear
 Thus soon should pass away.

Evelyn is gone ! his manly heart
 Has bowed beneath misfortune's blast,
But never shall his fame depart
 From earth while earth's best records last.

We grieve to lose that spirit-light
 Whose lamp of clay fell broken, when
Its rays had shone a moment bright,
 In beacon beams to kindred men.

Yet wherefore mourn the spirit gone
 To regions of celestial light,
To sing before his Maker's throne
 Amidst the host arrayed in white ?

It is because we feel alone
 And dull without a master-mind,
To wake the harp whose every tone
 Is wisdom's purest light combined
With melody the most refined.

Think of the diamond with its rays,
 Which charm and rivet every eye ;
But sweeter far are Evelyn's lays,
 So well his mind could beautify
And render thought in poetry.

His mind was beauty's counterpart,
 And music thrill'd its every chord,
But storms of woe compulsed his heart,
 And wrecked it ere he had explored
The realms whence longest strains are poured.

J S

Oh ! Parents, train the rising mind
 In all the ways of godliness,
And stay th' excess of passion blind
 Which fills the bold with dark distress.

He that would not be just to God
 Is seldom just to fellow-man,
But lost in self-will onward plod

Beneath the scourge of sin's dark ban.

The rising passions of the heart
Are like the waters of a lake,
Which must ere long in streams depart,
For good or ill their courses take.

And if they flow with headlong might
Where nature spreads her fairest bloom,
They onward bear corruption's blight,
Or revel in destruction's doom.

But if they flow in gentle streams
Along the plain's alluvial breast,
The earth with fragrant plenty teems,
And nature seems with sweets opprest.

And when the passions onward bound
In torrents dark with lust or spleen,
The plagues of sin are spread around
With voice and aspect most obscene.

But if they flow within the bound
Which God commanded they should keep,
The fruits of virtue, bliss, abound,
And hate and envy sink to sleep.

Go reach the vilest human heart,
And in its depths you yet will find,
Though hid in gloom, a noble part,
A heavenly pearl with stone combined.

The infant heart is free from stone -
The fairest pearls are budding there,
In mental depths by heaven sown,
O tend the germs with pious care.

Deal kindly with the tender heart,
If wayward smite it with a tear, -
In purest love perform thy part,
To thee and God each child endear.

The finest thing in nature known
Is childhood's soul arrayed in truth,
The noblest thing true virtue grown
Resplendent in the breast of youth.

But gentleness must crown the whole,
And spread its radiance o'er the mein,
And fix its music in the soul,
'Ere types of heaven on earth be seen.

J S

(Examiner 30 March 1858)

ORIGINAL

The earth was robed in fairest bloom,
The air was filled with sweet perfume,
And purple smiles adorned the sky ;
The waters kiss'd the yellow shore
As if their rage for e'er was o'er,
And they in sweetness thence would vie.

Some isles imbossm'd in a bay,
As if oppressed with beauty lay
Like things of life in blissful sleep ;
A city's sheen was on their tide,
And dolphins there were seen to glide,
Like Ocean's queen on Nature's throne.

And from her deck a virgin throng
Send o'er the waves a sacred song
In accents sweet with pure delight,
And made the hills and waters ring
In echo'd praise to Heaven's King,
Whose reign had dispel'd mental night.

And lions wandered round the strand
Obedient unto childhood's hand,
For every heart knew purest love,
And there the tiger and gazelle
In peaceful harmony did dwell,
As did the eagle and the dove.

J S

(*Examiner* 15 April 1858)

DEMBINSKI AND POLAND

Another orb of Poland's fire
Is beaten out by storms of woe ;
But yet its flame did not expire
Till many a heart had caught its glow.

Freedom and Science long will blend
Their tears o'er young Dembinski's tomb,
And mourn the loss of a true friend,
A hero of an exile's doom.

Hath Poland's star for ever set?
Or hath it wept itself away?
Or shall it shine resplendent yet,
Emitting Freedom's purest ray?

When Russia's battle maelstroms break
In mountain waves o'er Freedom's soil,
And 'neath the shock proud nations shake,
Brave Poland's soul shall not recoil.

Then Poland's eagle, white as snow,
Again shall breast the battle's flame,
As conquering on her armies go,
Eclipsing all their ancient fame.

The proudest nations shall behold her,
Braving Oppression's raging flame,
And shall feel their hearts beat bolder
At the glad sound of POLAND'S name.

Brave Poland's heart and Freedom's cause
Are bound in ties of holy right ;
And time shall see Oppression's laws
Dissolved beneath their 'stablished might.

His thirst for universal sway
The Russian despot can't restrain ;
And he himself will haste the day,
When Freedom's sons shall burst the chain.

J S

(Examiner 11 May 1858)

FREEDOM BEWARE

Beware of the vulture that soars in the north,
Whose talons are red with the blood of the
brave,
Whose pinions are nerved by ambitions and
wrath,
Whose heart is vain glory's detestable slave.

Beware of the serpents of well refined guile,
Whose words are worst venom in fairest
disguise,
Who'd cheat the whole world with a lie and a
smile,
If Wisdom should close for a moment her
eyes.
Oh freedom beware of the wily young Russ,
Nor think he'll not cherish the hopes of his
sires,
Who said 'The whole earth shall be governed
by us,
So onward destruction till freedom expires.'

But freedom descends from the fountain of
might,
A blessing which God in his mercy bestows,
And truest of men are directing its fight -
And soon they shall conquer their terrible
foes.

J S

(Examiner 15 May 1858)

ORIGINAL

God called creation from the night
Of chaos dark, and made the sun
To pour out floods of ether light,
Through time, and guide a system on.

And countless spheres for ever shine,
To break the darkness of the sky,
And speak a language all divine
To happy Reason's searching eye.

But what are all the orbs that shine
Resplendent in the blue of space,
Compared with Reason's right divine
That high exalts the human race ?

Those glorious orbs shall pass away,
Like dew drops in the furnace fire,
When fleeting Time's remotest day
Shall in eternity expire.

But Reason's spark of quenchless flame
Shall live in all eternity ;
In thoughtful feeling still the same,
A thing of bliss or misery.

More glorious than the orb of day
That fills the universe with light,
The soul shall shine for e'er and aye
That's sanctified by Truth and Right ;

Whose chiefest aim while here below
Is to advance the common weal,
Today the source of mortal woe,
And every mental wound to heal ;

And that devoid of selfish ends,
But for the glory of its God,
Whose love for man all else transcends,
That He by all may be adored.

As lasting as eternity,
And greater than the mind can tell,
Shall be such soul's felicity -
In highest heaven with God's t'will dwell.

And blest on earth such soul shall be,
With peace of mind for ever pure,
From th' life of corroding misery
Which every worldling must endure.

But he the wretch of sordid aim,
Of foul oppression, wrong, and guile ;
Though he possess a world of fame,
And dazzling fortune on him smile.

His guilty soul shall know no peace,
While in this striving world he reign ;

And when his mortal life shall cease,
He'll find eternity of pain.

In darkest gloom, in direst woe,
With kindred spirits doomed to dwell,
No beauty, rest, or love to know,
The slave of Satan, king of hell.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 20 November 1858)

ORIGINAL

Oh ! soon may equality triumph on earth,
That Mammon may cease to oppress humble
worth ;
And th' roses of Reason give odour and bloom
Unbowed by the tempest nor dimmed by the
gloom
Which cold-hearted pride, with its love of dis-
play,
Spreads wildly at present o'er virtue's lone way.

And soon may dear right be the sole guide to
fame,
And wrong disappear with the gloom of its
shame,
And Battle, who joys in destruction's career,
For every surrender the sword and the spear,
Till scared by just hatred his dark hellish soul
To blackest oblivion for ever shall roll.

The ills of this world are dissolving in light,
Which heaven is pouring on man's mental
night,
Thro' brave Christian hearts who, intent upon
good,
The spleen of presumption and pride have with-
stood ;
And e'er shall withstand till the scoffer in
shame
Shall sink into earth with contempt on his
name.

Ye sages whose souls are illumed by the light
Of wisdom from high, and whose cause is dear
right,
Advance with all haste on your heavenward
way,
And the children of truth will join you each
day,
And swell the glad cry 'Lo, our path leads
above.
Through fields of content, moral beauty, and
love.'

The blessings that blossomed on Eden's fair
plain
Are lost to us now, but shall bloom yet again,

To gladden mankind when all hearts shall
unite
In peace and in virtue, in freedom and right.
And soon may all mortals consent to receive
The grace which our God is so willing to give,
By which our lost blessings we learn to retrieve.

J S

(Examiner 4 December 1858)

COME FOR A STROLL TO THE CATARACT

O come for a stroll to the side of yon hill,
And list to the murmurs the Cataract pours
From her iron-bound lungs, now the breezes
are still,
And her waters flow placid along her steep
shores.
And there let us linger and view the glad
scene
Which nature presents to enrapture the eye;
When day is despairing, all sweetly serene,
And tinging with purple the dome of the sky.

Now see how the mountains far eastward that
rise
Are bathed in the radiance of eve's mellowed
light,
And how with the glow of a thousand bright [?]
dies
They softly smile back the first shadows of
night.

On a thousand low hills, with their vallies and
plains,
Which art has reclaimed from nature's wild
state,
The genius of culture has spread her domains,
And sweet beauty and fragrance her labours
create.

And yonder the Tamar, meand'ring and still,
With ships of the ocean afloat on her breast;
Where the shadows descend from yon wood -
mantled hill
As if to delight in the river's calm rest.

And beneath us the city lies spread o'er its
plain,
With its suburbs surmounting its rampart of
hills,
Which bend round the town in a fair sloping
chain,
And just where each Esk its glad mission
fulfils.

They may talk of the scenes of wild beauty in
Greece;

They may talk of the charms of fair Italy too;
But here all creation's fair things shall increase,
Till the world shall not know a more rap-
turous view.

And now this is the spot meditations will choose
When the wattle's sweet colours shall scent
the mild gale -
To wander alone and delightfully muse
As scanning the beauties of mountain and
vale.

Each scene is now bathed in wild yellow light,
Or steeped in the softest of shades that can
fall;
The Esks in their union are tenderly bright,
But adieu ere night spreads its wide mantle
o'er all.

Yes, let us walk home while yet slow waning
day
Is smiling good-by in the still glowing west,
With light like the beams o'er the features that
play,
Of a mother who lulls her dear angel to rest.

J S

December 4. (*Examiner* 14 December 1858)

HOPE ON

Hope on, hope on, and don't despair
But fill thy mind with wisdom's light,
When beams can banish gloomy care,
As rising Sol dispels the night,

Hope on, hope on, though all is dark
And reason's light too dimly shines;
Or lives but in a waning spark,
Wherewith no joyful thought combines.

Hope on, hope on, and break the tie
That binds alone to earthly things,
And let thy wounded spirit by
How sweet the joy religion brings.

And let thy spirit soar away
On pinions of celestial love,
Enshrined in truth's eternal ray,
Mount higher, higher, soar above;

Until the paradise you reach,
Of high salvation's joyful hill,
And thence look down and humbly teach
Your fellow man with holy zeal.

J S (*Examiner* 22 January 1859, p.2)

THE TATTERED ROSE ON A MAIDEN'S GRAVE

Molest not yonder rose
 Whose leaves, that tattered be,
May tell how near it blows
 To yonder blackthorn tree.

O harm or cull it not,
 But let it bleed and weep
Above the hallowed spot
 Where Mary's relics sleep.

I knew young Mary well;
 When fair in girlhood's bloom,
She shone a rustic belle
 Whose soul could naught assume.

Earth ne'er produced a flower
 More fair or pure than she,
To beautify life's hour
 Or yield to fate's decree.

As yonder rose is torn
 By thorns that round it wave,
Was Mary's breast, ere down
 It sunk to sorrow's grave.

For want and illness came,
 And envy hurled his dart
Against her spotless fame,
 And pierced her tender heart.

But I will fell the thorn
 And plant a willow there,
And otherwise adorn
 The grave with emblems fair.

And there the rose will bloom
 And shed its odours round,
And typify the doom
 Of her within the ground.

But O that some kind hand
 Had shielded her from harm,
Whose soul could not withstand
Misfortune's cruel storm.

O that the holy light
 That beautified her mind
Were shed upon the night,
 That makes the worldling blind.

No friend had she below,
 But He supreme above
Released her from her woe
 To triumph in his love.

J S (*Examiner* 22 January 1859, p.3)

January 14

THE SLAVE SHIP'S DOOM

Away, away, with many a sail
Wide spread to catch the howling gale,
Away, away, o'er waters white
With foam, a good ship holds her flight,
For why?

Humanity impels her crew
Their best and bravest deeds to do,
Or die.

For right a head a slaver flies
And swift pursuit at once defies;
For all confiding in their speed
They show the flag that tells they heed
No law!
Thus leagued with hell-defying man,
Shall they escape the righteous ban
Of war?

But see, there flies a mighty cloud
And wraps the ocean in a shroud-
As if the very soul of doom
Had sent a shadow of its gloom
To smite,
As rev'ling on in dreadful mirth,
The shud'ring sea and trembling earth
With fright.

How quick it came, how short its stay,
Already it hath passed away;
Our ship is safe, but where is she,
That little hell of slavery?
A speck,
Not far beneath the other's lee
An emblem of captivity
And wreck!

For heaven's certain vengeance came
In the red lightning's vivid flame,
That flew before the awful thunder,
And spread
Her tow'ring masts and every sail
Shattered and tattered on the gale
So dread.

When Britons quell in open flight
The iron hand of wrongful might,
Their bosoms thrill with joy and pride;
But when they catch upon the tide
The hounds
That live on human flesh and blood,
Their joy as ocean's endless flood
Abounds.

J S (*Examiner* 27 January 1859, p.3)

January 21.

THE SABBATH BELL

How oft I've heard the bell
That now sends music through the sky,
Awake its notes to tell
That worship's hour was verging nigh.

How oft that Sabbath bell
Hath woke my soul from dreams of gloom;
And said 'Excel, excel,
Let beauty in thy spirit bloom.

'Those sweet bell-notes ascend,
And softly ringing sound on high
And voice to-day doth lend,
Till heaven and earth greet in the sky.

Peal on, peal on sweet bell,
For in thy music sounds a voice,
Which says 'Excel, excel,
And thou in glory shalt rejoice.'

J S (*Examiner* 5 February 1859, p.5)

January 17.

IMAGINARY DANGER

I heard a loud crash
And a sudden dash,
I plunged into th' wave,
Determined to save;
I awoke, 'twas a dream.

I shuddered to think
I clung to the brink
Of a precipitous high;
And heard the wild scream
And saw the eyes gleam,
Of great hawks swooping nigh,
'Twas only a dream.

J S (*Examiner* 10 February 1859, p.3)

January 26.

HOME SWEET HOME

We've come from far,
And arrived are
To hasten home
No more to roam.
The wind's fair blowing,
The tide's fair flowing,
The sun is shining
But day's declining.
We've far to go
While th' waters flow,
Let's away
Steady aye.

Now we cleave
 The rolling wave;
 Before us view
 In sunny hue
 Yon orchard fair -
 Our house is there;
 Steady, have care
 Furl the sail
 From the gale,
 Our voyage is run,
 Our goal is won.
 And sisters meet us
 And kindly greet us,
 And parents come
 And welcome home,
 Where music rings,
 And friendship sings
 In sweetest measure
 Its heartfelt pleasure.
 No more from home
 We'll love to roam,
 But stay and cheer
 From year to year
 Our parents dear,
 At home, sweet home.

J S (*Examiner* 19 February 1859, p.3)

February 10.

GOG THE KING OF THE NORTH

Ezekiel ch. xxxviii

Are not Destruction's thunders past?
 Shall Battle's lightnings flash again,
 Among the gloom of ruins blast,
 O'er gory fields of countless slain?

If fell Destruction's soul should rise
 And nerve the arm of giant wrong;
 And Battle's thunders rend the skies,
 Justice and Truth be firm and strong.

Should armies clash and nations reel
 And mental night around be spread;
 Ye men of God increase your zeal,
 And light upon the darkness shed.

Press bravely on amidst the gloom,
 Heed not the dangers frowning near;
 Let tyrants see no threat'ning doom
 Unnerve your hearts with onward fear.

Heed not though hills should sink around
 Or rending earth beside you yawn;
 Think, chaos was the most profound,
 Just ere creation's glorious dawn.

Proud Gog shall fall and all his host
 And peace return with endless reign,

And glory vain no longer boast,
Nor triumph with her fields of slain.

So Heaven holds a mighty stone*
Impending o'er all evils now;
And very soon it shall come down,
Destroying all the roots of woe.

And when the thunders of Wrong's fall
Have passed for ever from the ear;
Their love for God shall usher all
Into the first millennial year.

And Christ the Saviour then shall reign
The chosen being of every heart;
And Eden's smiles shall come again
And never more from man depart.

J S (*Examiner* 22 February 1859, p.2)

*Dan, Chap.II, 34 verse

DEATH OF UNCLE TOM

Claimed and sealed is Uncle Tom
By the hand of waiting death ;
Come to free his spirits from
A brutal tyrant's meanest wrath.

Wrong may ease the burning chain
That has dried his victim's heart ;
But his selfish hopes are vain,
For now Tom's spirit shall depart.

Ay, but o'er his manly cheek
Comes a ray of mental light ;
Purest thoughts its gleamings peak,
It tells his soul is free and bright.

Like the stream that gently flows
In the forest's tender gloom, -
Scarcely noticed as it goes,
Altho' it makes the foliage bloom ; -

Was the faith that nerved his heart
And his every thought refined ;
Giving balm for every smart
That wrong can send to crush the mind.

Such the faith that filled his heart,
Beautifying all his soul,
Making thought sublimely start
Expanding past the world's control.

Like the wave that lingers bright,
Gleaming in the solar ray,
Glowing in the mellowed light
Of autumn's sweet declining day ; -

Was the faith born joy that shone

Purely beaming in his eye,
As he parted for the throne
Of God blessed eternally.

The greatest joys the worldly share
Are like sparks struck from flint at night ;
Opposed to day when we compare
Them with the bright glow of pure delight,

That comes to bless the righteous spirit
When Heaven opens on its view,
And angels call it to inherit
Eternal glory pure and true,
Too bright for mortal eyes to view.

Forth. J S
(*Examiner* 24 February 1859)

LET ME BE CANDID

Now let me be candid and speak what I
think,
I'll try to be pleasant, but yet will be plain,
From the strict path of duty I never will
shrink,
But the course of dear Right I will help to
maintain ;
And on will oppose you whenever you try
From suspicion to injure the good and the true ;
And pleased, you will tell me I'm right
by-and-by,
When time shall have made the points
plain unto you,
Which now you record in your partial re-
view,

But I'll only gainsay you when we are
alone,
Lest slander should make a long tale from
a word,
And then I'll address you in that gentle
tone
Which often with rapture unfeigned you
have heard ;
And if you should scold me no anger I'll
show
But let the rude storm of your passion
pass o'er,
And then on reflection's still surface will
glow
The bright rays of truth, and you kind-
ness restore.

FORTH. J S
(*Examiner* 26 February 1859)

SHAME UPON EVIL-DOERS

May blackest shame
Attend the flame,
And blight the hopes for ever,
Of all who would endeavour
In any mood to sever
The love of man and wife, -
The dearest charm in life
That unto us is given,
Excepting hope of heaven ;
Or sever friendships tie
With rancor's actor lie ;
Or pour on kindness's sweet
The gangrene of deceit,
And risk the love of friends
To advance sordid ends ;
Unless that they repent,
Renounce each bad intent,
Escape from Satan's thrall,
And try to undo all
The evil they have done,
And white their life's sands run,
Be just and kind to all.
And may the villain vile,
Who wins his way with guile
To confidence and trust,
As Judas did of old,
When thirsting after gold,
Like Judas fell accurst,
Unless that he repent,
Renounce each bad intent,
In goodness persevere,
And always be sincere.

Forth. J S
(*Examiner* 2 April 1859)

I am free! I am free! on my own native hills,
And soon I will drink of my river and rills;
But wake, oh my people, come forward my men,
And greet your loved chief by his waters again.

I hear your glad voices, come here, oh come here,
And flourish around me each waddy and spear;
And bring forth your children to greet me again:
Fly forward and meet me, my women and men!

He said, and he rushed on like a light-hearted boy
Whose reason is lost in a phrenzy of joy
On beholding the scene where sweet freedom's delight
Had for years made his moments seems joyous and
bright;

Where he reigned as a chief in the vigor of youth,
The beloved of his tribe for valour and truth;

The first to make peace, but the victor for right
Whenever aggression compelled him to fight.

Till his white brothers came on their mission of gain,
And asserted dominion o'er all his domain;
Till insulted and wronged he resorted to strife,
And was sent into exile and sorrow for life.

He stopped at the water and called on his men,
Then suddenly paused, and he spoke not again,
For it flashed on his mind that he sounds that he
 heard
Were but echoes that came from his own empty word!

In sorrow he looked for a moment around,
Then fell with his bosom prostrate on the ground,
And when he arose, in his dull vacant stare,
Was written dark horror and dreamy despair.

'Twas clear that he thought that misfortune's worst
 doom
Had darkened his soul with its cold endless gloom,
Since he and his people no longer could find
A loved home, or e'en freedom, 'mongst the rest of mankind.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 10 December 1859)

This poem appeared at the end of a discourse on Aboriginal history, during which Smith mentioned an Aboriginal chief who had been returned to his homeland, the edge of Cataract Gorge. The poem is an imagined account of the chief's reactions. It makes an interesting comparison with 'Come for a Stroll to the Cataract', which is Smith's personal tribute to Cataract Gorge and the Tamar a year earlier.

FRANKLIN

His soul is now exalted with the bless'd.
His mortal life was closed in regions where
He won most of the honors he in life pos-
 sessed ;
And lasting records fitly shall declare
How well he merited the spotless fame
That shall for ever spread its halo round his
 name.

Once with his manly rule the isle was blest ;
And mild indeed was his vice-regal way,
As noble hearted thousands can attest,
Who deeply grieved when he was called
 away ;
And as they read the record of his end
They all lamenting feel the world has lost a
 friend.

And lasting grief is felt for those he led ;
But purest sympathy would ask, Are they
All lost, all number'd with misfortune's dread?
O! reason, pause and ponder ; none can say
They are ; while duty's voice unceasing

cries,
Send search for them and prove your noble
sympathies.

They strove to ope the way for enterprise ;
Their country planned the work they went
to do,
Disasters thickly came 'midst snow and ice ;
They struggled to escape all this we know.
Their country sent them forth, and truly she
Should search for those of them who living
yet may be.

And oh! If some survive in regions where
Eternal snows but seldom see the sun,
How great must be their sufferings and
despair,
As thinking of the ills they cannot shun,
And still contrasting them with all the joy
The common blessings of their country
would supply.

Ah! who can tell the anguish of each mind
That cannot leave the dreary Arctic plain,
To fly to home and friends whose charms
e'er bind
The soul to them with lasting love's strong
chain,
Whose secret links must be upheld by joy,
Or soon they sink the heart and canker or
destroy.

We all should emulate the deeds of her
Whose soul was nerved by pure devotion's
zeal,
Whose quenchless hope, amidst repelled
despair,
Its pure and tender beauty did reveal
For him she loved so well that soul by whom
Her love was cherished till it spread devo-
tion's bloom.

J S

Forth, 17th December.

(*Examiner* 21 January 1860)

CHRISTIAN LOVE

When Christians meet,
And kindly greet,
In friendship sweet,
And feel their hearts grow fonder ;
How warmly bright,
Is their light,
If gratefully they ponder,
On deeds of love,
Performed to prove,
'Midst grief or joy's emotion,

That no anger, pride,
 Nor aught beside,
 Can mar their self-devotion,
 Which blooms because
 They keep the laws,
 In Gospel doctrine given,
 Our souls to bless
 With blissfulness,
 And guide our path to Heaven.
 A friendship pure,
 Which will endure
 With joy secure,
 Springs but from that communion,
 Where goodness bright,
 E'er sheds its light,
 And e'er hallows social union ;
 Makes knowledge flow,
 In wisdom's glow,
 With sweet and pure expression ;
 And leads the way
 Through every day,
 Of truly blest progression ;
 And all because,
 Of keeping laws,
 In Gospel doctrine given,
 Our souls to bless,
 With blissfulness,
 And guide in peace to Heaven.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 29 August 1861)

EARTHLY HOPES

The hopes which mortals cherish
 Too seldom bloom in joy,
 And perish, oft like flowers,
 That blighting winds destroy.
 But every earthly flower,
 And every earthly thing,
 Must perish in dark ruin,
 Which time will swiftly bring.

 And if our hopes are earthly,
 They cannot be secure ;
 And like earth's fragile flowers,
 They will not long endure.
 But if our hopes are holy
 They'll bloom in Heaven's light,
 And lastingly will flourish,
 Enchanting pure and bright.

 For then each mental feeling
 E'er thrills with sweetest joy,
 For truth our souls pervading,
 Doth make our hearts employ
 Their talents for GOD's glory,
 And gain the high rewards
 Of bliss, and love, and honor,

His perfect grace affords.
J S
Forth. (*Examiner* 29 October 1861)

FRIENDSHIP

When chilling misfortune has ruthlessly cast
Many soul-grieving ills in the path we must tread,
And the storm-clouds of sorrow are gathering fast,
And beginning to break with wild wrath on our
 heads,
Oh, then it is cheering to find we possess
The love of a heart that ne'er sullies the name
Of that holy friendship so many profess,
When the fortune of wealth has decreed us its fame.

I like not the friendship that money doth bring,
For all self-loving knaves are adorers of gold ;
But if fortune flies from one, their friendship takes
 wing,
And then they are found to be distant and cold ;
And perhaps they then say, although not to one's
 face,
That they've found he had faults of the very worst
 kind,
And that they believe it were quite a disgrace
To own friendship with one with so worthless a
 mind.

But show me the friendship that springs from esteem
For pure virtue that truly enobles below,
And then the full fount of my friendship shall teem,
And e'er warm and unceasing its currents shall flow,
For all who thus render respect unto worth,
And reward it with friendship unselfish and pure ;
For their love is of heaven, far more than of earth,
And as long as its object its warmth will endure.

J S
Forth, January, 1859. (*Examiner* 19 December 1861)

TO -

You're lost, it seems,
 In love's young dreams,
As if for you love's measure
 Would fast run o'er
For evermore
 With essence of sweet pleasure

And O may joy
 Her arts employ,
To make you happy ever ;
 And baneful care,
And its despair,
 Approach your spirits never.

But you must mind,
 Be good and kind,
Or you will fill love's measure,
 With cold distress,
And bitterness
 And forfeit all love's pleasure.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 25 January 1862)

DISAPPOINTMENT

He felt that his spirit
 Was sent from above
To this earth to inherit
 A measure of love ;
But he found that affection
 Had bloomed not for him, -
While the gloom of dejection
 Had made his path dim.

He said - 'Courage, my spirit ;
 Be wise and love right,
And thou soon shall inherit
 The blessed delight
Which to virtue is given
 To charm it below,
As it journeys to heaven
 Exempted from woe.'

How blest the affliction
 That wounds us on earth,
If by Heaven's direction
 It purifies worth,
Of promptings of error,
 Of sordid alloy,
And for moments of sorrow
 Brings ne'er ceasing joy.

J S

Forth, May, 1861. (*Examiner* 1 February 1862)

AND AYE WE LOVE MORE DEARLY

(Imagined.)

I loved her long with passion pure
 As fair one e'er inspired ;
When prose with virtue charms to lure,
 The swain her heart desired.

But keen suspense consumed my heart,
 For bashfulness controlled me ;
Though she performed love's modest part,
 As sweet expression told me.

My days seemed weeks, my weeks seemed years
 While thus I shyly courted ;
And with my hopes and doubts and fears,

Methought each gay thing sported.

At length her hand I took in mine
And vowed I loved her dearly ;
And saw the glow of love o'ershine
Her modest features clearly.

Eternal love we vowed that day
And vowed it most sincerely ;
And years since then have passed away,
And aye we love more dearly.

J S

L E L

She has gone from her dear native isle.
And her home is on Afric's far shore ;
And we think of the light of her joy-beaming
smile,
Which shall brighten the spirits of mortals no
more.

For her home is the grave, and her end*
Was most sudden, mysterious, and dark ;
Nor e'en blest by the love of a true-hearted
friend
To record the last gleams of her mortal life's
spark.

But the gems of her genius shall shine
With a lustre no slander can blight ;
And cherished respect be her memory's shrine,
While the lays of true genius shall waken
delight.

J S

Forth, 1859.

*There is not any positive evidence that she committed suicide ; and therefore I believe that Christian charity and justice forbid that we should imagine that she was guilty of wilfully terminating her own mortal existence.

(both *Examiner* 7 June 1862)

HOMER'S DAYS AND OUR DAYS ; OR THE PROGRESSION OF POETRY

Homer sang of martial strife,
And mortal gods who went to war,
Buying fame with human life,
And spreading ruin wide and far.

Homer sang of martial lays
To Greeks, who worshipped gods of stone,
In those ancient heathen days,
E'er gospel principles were known.

Heathen days were days of wrong ;
Brute force, not justice, then prevailed ;

False glory crowned the conquering strong,
While Freedom's every effort failed.

This is quite another time,
As each and all should understand,
Now sage Right ascends sublime,
With Freedom's joys for every land.

Past events have taught us how
Ambition's guile and strife destroy
Right's best fruits, and poets now
Progression's noblest themes employ.

Christian truth and love and peace,
With all their blessings now are sung
In sweet strains which shall increase
Till loud they ring from every tongue.

Truth declares men shall unite,
In Christian purpose nobly strong,
And establish peace and right,
No more to yield to strife and wrong.

This shall be then, peace and love
Shall sweetly bloom in happiness,
Through grace and wisdom from above,
And ever cherished righteousness.

Past and present then will show,
'Midst universal mental light,
That only wrong can gender woe,
And that the joy [?] blooms with right.

Then, too, Homer's lays may last,
And warn from false ambition's guile,
As beacons warn from dangers vast
That lie beneath bland ocean's smile.

For then sage Wisdom will employ
E'en folly's work to aid her cause -
To show the ills which marred her joy
When nations spurned her blessed laws.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 2 November 1862)

LIVINGSTONE

Bright, bright is the page that records the pure
fame
That for ever shall hallow great Livingstone's
name ;
And dear is that page to the spirit of ruth, [?]
As the beams of pure justice to right-loving truth.

Vain nations may boast of their heroes of strife -
The weak vot'ries of pride, the destroyers of life ;
But Britain shall point to her true heroe's [sic] mind,
And glory through time in her Livingstone's fame.

False ambition shall quail in the light of that
fame,
And shuddering think of her merited shame ;
And oft turn from adoring at false honor's shrine,
And sigh for that glory that's purely divine.

He braves all the dangers that lurk near his path -
The fever, the lion, the savage - his wrath,
No troubles can daunt him, no perils affright,
Where duty commands him to labor for right.

This kind self-devotion's exerting its seal
With glorious results for the African's weal ;
For while conquering wrong, 'tis establishing right
In glorious power and unquenchable light.

The hard stubborn heart of the savage shall melt,
With the fervor of goodness e'er cherished and
felt ;
And uncouthness be changed into gentleness kind,
'Neath the influence sweet of the great teacher's
mind.

And peace and goodwill shall diffuse all their joy,
And new science and art all their talent employ,
And new genius shall rise with truth's banner un-
furled,
And shed its sweet essence o'er all the wide world.

And eventually all that the Godhead designed
To bless and exalt poor degraded mankind,
Shall rise from the wisdom, that medium of Hea-
ven,
Great Livingstone's soul to the Afric hath given.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 4 November 1863)

I NEVER WILL BELIEVE SUCH A TRUTH-DOUBTING TALE

They tell me that Friendship has fled from the
earth -
And that as it departed it quenched the pure ray
Which the spirit of kindness was shedding for
worth,
To cheer all its movements and brighten the way.

And they tell me that Love finds no pleasure but
in
The favor of Mammon, and that her best smile
Is a bloom o'er deception, assumed but to win
The weak simple hearts whom worst follies be-
guile.

But I ne'er will believe such a truth-doubting tale,
For I know that its authors e'er cherish deceit,
And believe that all others are selfish and frail,
Because their own friendship or love is a cheat.

It is true there are some who too often confide
In bad hearts who pretend to be kind, true, and
just -

And so are deceived ; but friendship that's tried,
And oft found to be true, we may still fondly
trust.

But 'tis only adversity ever can prove
The truth or the falseness of those who profess
To cherish for others that seeming sweet love
That's bestowed on the rich to constant xcess. [sic]

But *if* when life's troubles have risen around,
And the gold is all gone that we lately possessed ;
Oh ! then, if of hundreds, but one should be found,
Still faithful and kind 'twill atone for the rest.

So great is the blessing, so sweet the delight
That springs from the thought that one dear heart
is true,
When the coldness and gloom of Adversity's night
Have closed o'er the path which we still must pursue.

And, oh, if when afflicted with any sad doom,
The light of such friendship illumines our way,
It soothes, and it cheers, and makes Hope's efforts
bloom,
And bring forth their sweet fruits in bright Joy's
warming ray.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 28 April 1863)

SPURN EACH SELFISH, BASE DESIGN

Each legislator's deeds will be
Recorded on true history's page,
For all inquiring minds to see,
In this and every future age ;
And mighty justice will accord
The need of praise, where such is due,
And blazon [sic] to the world each deed
Performed with honest purpose true.

And Oh be sure, in this our isle,
The soul of justice will not sleep,
Or be deceived by selfish guile,
But faithful watch will ever keep,
And merit and demerit show
With bold, discriminating pow'r -
Will praise each friend, denounce each foe -
Through all the world, through every hour.

Then, legislators, pray beware,
And honest counsel don't despise,*
If lasting fame you wish to share,
And be esteemed just and wise.

But spurn each selfish, base design,
With glorious right promoting seal,
And soon your deeds will lasting shine
Resplendent in the people's weal.

Forth.

J S

*Honest counsel is continually given in the prevailing opinion of the public press.
(*Examiner* 2 May 1863)

TO PATRIOTS

Ye patriots who plead for quick reform,
And make the rights of men your constant theme,
Beware nor let your zeal become too warm
For just restraint ; however your cause may seem,
Beware and know that if ye would redeem
Oppressed nations from oppression's blight,
Ye first must teach them justly to esteem
And cherish every principle of right,
Then heaven will bless them with all needful
true delight.

And even if ye, at once, could overthrow
Oppression's power, and establish all
The liberty that Freedom could bestow,
Where unity is poisoned by the gall
Of party discord - frequent cause of thrall ;
Or where ambition, pride, and bigotry
Reign more than truth - there Freedom's fruits
would fall
Blighted beneath the breath of Tyranny -
A sage might rule, but what would his successors
be?

How oft hath Freedom risen in blood to be
Trampled by tyrants worse than those who fell
As rung the cheers of so-called liberty,
Which Vengeance vowed no wrong should ever
quell.

Review the past : - ye now should know full well
The moral lesson time so oft hath lent,
And which Philosophy should widely tell
As on her highest missions all intent ;
'Tis this : - TRUE FREEDOM grows with TRUE
ENLIGHTENMENT.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 26 May 1864)

KINDNESS

For us all there is bliss,
O ye mortals, on this
Noble, Heaven-watched planet of ours ;
But if with delight,
Yet would make your souls bright,
And e're live in joy's sunshine midst flowers,

All you think, say, and do
Must be kind, just, and true,
For each perfect and lasting delight
That can soothe us below,
Or exempt us from woe,
Can exist but with kindness and right.

For the good and the kind,
There is friendship refined,
And faithful and sweet wedded love,
With a charm and a pow'r,
To brighten each hour,
And they joy their devotion to prove ;
And their fervour and say [?],
In adversity's day,
Can dispel frowning sorrow's dark gloom,
Ere its vapors can blight,
The sweet hopes and delight,
That with goodness and kindness e're bloom,

For those virtues of Heav'n
That to bless us were given,
When by deeds and by words they are known,
Have sweet charms that smite
In unceasing delight,
All congenial, dear hearts, with their own.
And they all ever know
That their God will bestow
All the blessings they here can desire ;
As in harmony true,
Duty's path they pursue,
And to Heaven's high joys they aspire.

O ! then let me delight
In true kindness and right,
And bring round us love, friendship, and
 peace ;
As true wisdom has taught
That we can -and we ought -
And e'er make the sweet blessings increase.
And with Joy's warning light
All our souls will be bright,
Till, redeemed from this world, we ascend
With dear angels of love
To the bright realms above,
To share glory and bliss without end.

J S

Forth, Feb, 1863 (*Examiner* 2 June 1864)

ON THE AGGRESSION OF AUSTRIA AGAINST PIEDMONT, IN 1859

Aggression brandishes the sword of war ;
In Austria's name, and bids her legions on ;
And rings the call to battle near and far
At Hapsburg's nod, as points he to the crown
Of him who sits upon Sardinia's throne ;
While Hapsburg's myrmidons declare that they
Will make the wished-for prize their master's

own.

But mediation speaks. What doth she say ?
She pleads for peace, yet arms aggression's work
to stay.

For France prepares to thwart her former foe :
With Piedmont's ranks her legions fast suite.
Shall peace prevail ? Ambition mutters-no.
For Austria's pride exults in Austria's might,
And feigns to think her cause is blest by right,
As her proud chieftains with their boots advance,
With vaunting boast all eager for the fight,
Nor deign to meditate how slight the chance
Of vanquishing the legions of imperial France.

Now bursts the storm of war on Piedmont's
plains.
And flash destruction's lightnings to the sky ;
But ere subversion half can forge the chains-
The burning chains of ruthless tyranny-
Her hateful love of wrong to gratify,
She sees her foremost champions flee or fall,
While hill and valley echo victory :
Through many a Roman State, whose patriots all
Loudly applaud the conquering Piedmontese and
Gaul.

And rings the world with Garibaldi's fame
For deeds of daring? Freedom is his theme,
And its establishment his constant aim,
A dauntless patriot he, who would redeem
The world from foulest wrong, till earth should
teem
With blessings which no tyranny could mar :
If such could be. And he doth almost seem
Like Pater [?], when his heart was prone to war,
And would rain fire on all he thinks Right's foe-
men [?] are

But now the strife abates, and now 'tis past ;
But oh ! what thousands thus were swept away
By fell destruction's spleen-directed blast,
Because a single heart was led astray
From right by pride's presumption and display,
And in his fancied might presumed to think
That weaker powers cringing should obey
His mandates, and without a murmur drink
The bitterness of wrong from vile oppression's
sink.

And oh ! what thousands wounded in the fight
Now writhe and groan in agonising pain,
Till e'n the victors feel their fierce delight
Gives place to grief (which they cannot restrain),
Even for foes who still would them enchain ;
While o'er three nations sounds a wall of woe
For husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers slain,
Fast from whose souls warm blessings late did
flow,

For love-responding hearts in sorrow now sunk
low.

Ye ruthless tyrants who delight in blood,
And for the spread of evil use the might
Which Heaven lent ye to promote all good
On earth, Oh how ye mar the warm delight
Of many millions with dark sorrow's blight,
How dread your doom on retribution's day,
If unstoned your crimes, when sacred right,
In blissful glory, shall the just array,
And drive the wicked to perdition's woes [?] away.

Proud Austria hath exposed her poverty,
And added yet another blot of shame
To those dark crimes that stain her history,
And bring the scorn of justice on her name ;
Though she is jealous still of honor's fame.
How long she worships at ambition's shrine,
Serving perversion with decided aim ;
When bright with high resolve here [?] should
shine,
The loved and sage-like champion of all right
divine.

Oh, Austria ! wake to sense of deepest shame,
Atone for seas of blood which thou hast spilt ;
The way is open still to brightest fame,
And thou may'st yet be purified of guilt
In reparation's blessings, if thou wilt
Render to all what justly they may claim.
The fame which thou hast gained in strife is
built

Upon corruption's rottenness and shame ;
Hatred is thine, but merit, love, exalt thy aim.

J S

Forth (*Examiner* 9 June 1864)

SONG - LOVE AND GRATITUDE

Evils around me afflicting may start,
Aiming their woes every day at my heart,
Still I can ne'er repine,
Since that warm love of thine
For me doth ever shine,
And bliss impart.

All thou hast done in affection refined
Deep in my bosom is ever enshrined;
Where, thrilling night and day,
Thoughts glow that will repay
In loudest, purest way
Thy love so kind.

J S

Forth. (*Examiner* 5 October 1865)

TO THE REVEREND WALTER MATHIESON, OF THE RIVER FORTH

Dear rev'rend Sir, ten years have passed since
thou

Became'st a Christian pastor in this land,
Whither thou cam'st at Duty's urgent call
From home and joys and friends in happy
England,

Where thou didst minister as thou dost here.

While here with us thy labor has been hard,
But it is blest with many good results,
As will attest the converts thou hast made-
The concord that prevails amongst thy flock-
The little they evince of bigotry-
The handsome chapels by subscription built,
Wherein to render services divine
Under thy pastorate when duty bids-
The Sabbath Schools of thy wide pastorals,
Wherein the young around are edified-
Thy zealous helpers in the sacred cause,
To whom the need [?] of praise is likewise due-
The constant love of many hearts for thee-
All these proclaim how faithful thou hast been,
As one who is ordained to minister
To souls in need of saving grace divine.

May Heaven prosper thee still more each day
In sacred Duty's ever urgent cause,
That thou may'st lead full many more to gale [?]
The greatest blessing Heav'n vouchsafes on earth,
That tranquil joy, that constant peace of mind,
That e'er belongs to the regen'rate state ;
And that through thee more hearts may testify
Of all the 'mercies of redeeming love.'
And oh, may Heaven opportunely grant
All needful blessings unto thee and thine,
To keep ye wise and happy here on earth ;
And when called hence to future life may each
In Heav'n possess a 'crown of righteousness'
Through faith and works that unto faith per-

tain,
And see bright crowns possessed by thousands
more

Whoever shall praise their God for sending thee
To seek [?] and save them in the Saviour's name.

ERNEST JAMES

(*Examiner* 15 August 1867)

CHRISTIAN PREACHERS

We much should love and honor those
Who, having learned religion well,
And entered on its ministry,
E'er preach the Gospel earnestly,
As duty bids, wh'er they go,
And so proclaim how we should live ;
With truth, humility, and love,
And gentle kindness joined with these
In earnest zeal ; and who can ne'er

By favor or by prejudice
 Be turned from honest principle,
 But have an equal love for all
 Who own the Christian doctrine kind,
 And unto it obedient are ;
 And love the erring, too, from hope
 That they will turn to righteousness ;
 And good for ill discreetly do,
 And love their enemies because
 The Saviour hath commanded thus ;
 And seek approval not of men,
 But of their God, yet knowing well
 That all the just will honor them.
 Never in vain such men can preach
 For reverence accrues to them
 From all who love the good and true,
 And Christians worth appreciate ;
 And as the Bible they expound
 God's wisdom speaks in their discourse,
 And bright salvation's pleasant way
 Is clearly shown, and souls are taught
 To crave the need of grace divine,
 Wherein is joy unspeakable. [?]
 'Tis through such preachers God hath sent
 His love and mercy, truth, and right,
 To all the races of mankind.
 They are the sages of the earth,
 The truly wise, the truly great ;
 They tell us what we ought to do,
 And show how well it can be done -
 And so true precept and example
 They e'er combine and exercise [?]
 To edify and to exalt
 Our fallen, frail humanity.

ERNEST JAMES

(*Examiner* 8 October 1867)

ANNEXATION - PERISH THE THOUGHT!

TASMANIANS BE TRUE.

Tasmanians to yourselves be true,
 Let not your rights be sold ;
 Be wise ! the future's yet for you,
 And blessings 'twill unfold.
 For all who zeal and worth combine,
 For all who nobly toil,
 In city, town, or in the mine,
 Or on the fertile soil.

Be stout of heart and persevere,
 Pray for prosperity ;
 Let sense of duty guide and cheer,
 Let truth your watchword be.
 And e'er with moral courage strong,
 Each rising evil quell ;
 Defend dear right from every wrong,
 And all will then be well.

ERNEST JAMES
(*Examiner* 31 October 1867)

CONVERSION OF THE JEWS

The human wisdom of the Israelite
 Shall yet give place to wisdom all divine ;
Then Israel great shall be in moral might,
 According to their God's foretold design,
Which they've so long opposed in selfish pride,
And so of home and joys themselves denied.

And lo ! repentant Israel yet shall be
A nation loved by all the tribes of earth
And greatly blessed with prosperity
All through their land because of zealous worth
Which over all the world shall lasting shine
In well performed works of right divine.

Then Jesu's blest religion shall pervade
The various tribes of Adam's scattered race,
Whom hate and strife shall then no more
 degrade,
Or selfish nationality disgrace ;
But ever firmly joined in brotherhood
By love of right, they'll keep all wrong subdued.
ERNEST JAMES
(*Examiner* 21 November 1867)

REGENERATION

The following lines were composed in consequence of having heard a minister of the Gospel say in a sermon he preached, that the sins of the truly penitent pass away in the sight of God's grace, as snow passes away from mountains beneath the warming influence of the sun-

The snow upon the mountain's breast
 Keeps cold and dark the plants below ;
Until it is dissolved beneath
 The sun's invigorating glow.

And then those plants grow fair and well,
 And spread their flowers' diffuse perfume,
And beautify the mountain's breast,
 And useful fruits attend the bloom.

And sin on many a human soul
 Keeps cold and dark in resting place ;
Until it is annulled beneath
 The cheering light of Heaven's grace.

Then thoughts long kept both cold and dark,
 Sweet thoughts sent down from Heaven to
 bless ;
Bloom fair and well, adorn the mind,
 And yield best fruits of usefulness.
ERNEST JAMES

(Examiner 5 December 1867)

WATERLOO

Now Britons nerve your breasts for bravest
deeds,
Again for others' sakes your blood must flow ;
Again upon his course the spoiler speeds,
And his fierce vengeance now is hurled on
you ;
How gallantly ye stood at Waterloo,
Braving destruction in his fell career ;
Till desperate valor nothing more can do,
War's clouds disperse. The British lion's
there,
And o'er his fallen foe in pity sheds a tear.

But most that fallen foe is vanquished by
The evil deeds of his own heart and hand,
Which crashed down sovereign powers ; for he
did try
To subjugate the world to his command,
With fire and sword ; nor learnt to understand,
Until too late, that friends of liberty
When roused excel in power those who band
Against that right which is ordained to be
Promoted o'er the world to sure supremacy.

Shall tyrants cast down powers God hath up-
raised,
And yet escape his anger's chastisement ?
No, no ! Review the past - in ancient days,
Ambition's tyrants all unjustly sent
Their mighty armies forth - and where they
went,
They sink the nations in subversion low ;
Till certain retribution rose and rent
Their all oppressive might ; and then dread
woe
Recoiled on them. Eternal justice dooms
it so.

And Britain boast not what thy might achieve
In aid of proudest nations in distress ;
While 'neath thy taunting power India grieves
With wounded pride that sights itself to bless ;
With all that love of freedom would possess,
Hath she not cherish nationality ?
Whose brooding hate is goaded to excess
At foreign thrall. Beware, such hate may be
A sure promot e'en [?] of adverse fate to thee.

ERNEST JAMES

(Examiner 21 November 1868)

HAIL TASMANIA !

Hail Tasmania, young and fair,
With thine institutions free ;
Wisdom fondly bids thee share,
Blessings of prosperity.

Effort can beat joys secure
Self reliance [?] siding well ;
Honest purposes are sure,
Heaven makes their might prevail.

Skilful toil will well succeed ;
This can make a hardy race ;
Quick in thought, and bold in deed,
Forms of strength and manly grace.

Fields are here for industry -
Fertile soil and varied mine ;
Who would then a sluggard be,
Who would cowardly repine.

Brave it is to persevere,
Making fortune favor us ;
Blessing selves and those most dear,
Noble hearts will e'er do thus.

ERNEST JAMES

(*Examiner* 31 July 1869)

WE'LL GUIDE OUR OWN AFFAIRS

Our Christian duty we'd ever do,
We would join all nations in friendship
true ;
Join for science, art, and trade
To advance, exalt, and aid.
CHORUS - With fatherland protecting,
With fatherland protecting,
With fatherland protecting,
We'll guide our own affairs.

But we will govern separate,
And never trust our country's fate
Where wrong judgment might decree
Lasting ills and mockery.
Chorus - With fatherland, &c.

If our true hearts will but stand forth
In all the might of moral worth,
And e'er with patriot zeal direct and lead,
Then we nobly shall succeed.
Chorus - With fatherland, &c.

ERNEST JAMES

(*Examiner* 3 August 1869)

AID AND CHEER EACH OTHER

With proper union all through the state
We'd grow fast in wealth, and in knowledge great ;
All would be kind and helping friends,
And use best means for noblest ends.

Then aid and cheer each other,
Then aid and cheer each other,
Then aid and cheer each other,
And kind success will come.

Our fields would give best fruitful store ;
Our mines would yield their various ore ;
Art and science flourish well ;
Genius in her works excel.

Then aid and cheer each other, &c.

Now's the time to do our best,
To make each other wise and blest ;
True earnest unity with noble aim
Wins true joy, and wealth, and fame.

Then aid and cheer each other, &c.

ERNEST JAMES

(*Examiner* 20 January 1870)

TO THE RIVER FORTH

On to the ocean rolls
Pass on, to thy great sea home,
To where the breakers with snow-like foam,
Surge on the sand in the tempest storm,
Where thou wilt be lost in the mighty whole;
To where thy banks shall no longer control,
On to thy ocean home

Yet never cease thy flow;
O winding Forth, but onward still,
Gathering volume from each little rill,
That trickles down every dewy hill;
And thus upon the meadow land bestow
Blessing of beauty, where thy stream doth go.
Flow onward, onward still

I've gazed upon thy tide;
When the sunsets redning light,
Coloured by ripples all roseate bright
Until day's orb [?] had, withdraw[n] from sight,
And, through the deepening darkness thou didst glide,
Waiting whilst the mystic shadows bide
For morn's returning light

I've lingered by thy stream
When the moonbeams silvered thy breast
Then any soul with wondrous thought was blest
My spirit in its day could never rest,
But upward, upward where the stars do gleam
In all their purity and calm serene

It rose from out my breast,

Many memories are thine:
Memories of sadness and pain
Like as thou art darksome during rain
Memories of joy, that will ever remain
As when the sun in thy clear depths doth shine
Reflecting the heavens cloudless and fine
Thus I forget the pain

I think of human souls
As I watch the gathering might,
Breaking like streams into mortal sight
Spreading onward, forward, day and night
Growing stronger, escaping the shoals,
Hasting to where the eternal sea rolls,
Lost in their being's might

O Forth: O river dear !
Still on wards roll to the sea
Edged by beauty in flower and tree
It is my prayer to be like thee,
Bearing richest blessing in heart sincere,
Growing stronger, nobler in drawing near
To Love's eternal sea !

X X*

Forth, June 4, 1872.

(*Examiner* 13 June 1872, p.3)

**There is a copy of this poem in Smith's notes bearing his signature.*

DEAD

See the youthful Christian dying, mark his latter
end ;
See him on that couch so lowly, see the friends
who o'er him bend ;
In the open window stealing, comes the breath of
morn,
Full of bright and living odours, wafted from
the corn.
And without the glorious sun shining in his
might,
Vivifies the plants and flowers growing in his
light ;
But the pilgrim's days are numbered, life is now
a span,
For him, earth and beauty slumber ; he, the
dying man,
He now leaves this vale of sorrow ; - joy too,
rightly used,
For the good God views with kindness, plea-
sures not abused ;
Those he loved have gone before him, in their
youth and pride.
Passed have they the flooded tide, passed over
to the other side,
Straining with love to see him land in all purity,
Waiting with helpful hand, trustful serenity,

Soft peal the angel chimes o'er the silent river,
 Hearts bound by love, and truth, nothing can
 dissever.
 O'er the world a mist of darkness hovers like a
 pall,
 O'er heaven a mist of glory, God o'ershadow-
 ing all ;
 Glorious bursts the sun of heaven, fades the
 moon of earth,
 The pilgrim leaves his house of clay, to find his
 home of birth ;
 Shouts and acclamations wait him as he climbs
 the skies,
 Where a still small voice is whispering, 'Higher,
 higher, rise,
 Thou hast earned a crown of glory, fought the
 victor's fight,
 Come and tune thy harp before me, God is in
 thy sight.'

J S

(*Examiner* 3 October 1876)

THE FALL OF CAMILLE (FRENCH WAR CORRESPONDENT)

When tyranny rules without restraint,
 In vain may be uttered each just complaint ;
 And the greatest of crimes which vengeance
 can reach,
 In the eyes of the tyrant is freedom of speech.

But there are those who can dare the decree
 Of the tyrant no matter how stern it may be ;
 Though certain for words that they write
 or they speak,
 The tyrant how power full vengeance to
 wreak.

And if vengeance approaches in form of
 death,
 They can prove to the worth with their
 latest breath,
 That 'tis easier for them with honor to die
 Than to live degraded by sycophancy.

And Camille of France had vowed to be true
 In all he was pledged to dare and to do ;
 And though by the guile of coercion be-
 trayed,
 A protest defiant next moment he made.

In this open protest he vowed he would tell
 The truth and the whole truth both quickly
 and well ;
 Concerning the deeds he should know to be
 done,
 When battles in China were lost or were won.

Then to dog all his steps was the work of a spy,
And the work of the same to testify
That Camille was another of strictures severe
On the means that were used in conducting
the war.

Arraigned by a court-martial's power,
His trial was brief at midnight's hour ;
And his sentence pronounced in levity
Was, that shot in the morning 'at six'
he should be.

The hour has arrived and he takes his stand
Before the file with their rifles in hand ;
And with the firm will that can danger
despise,
He spurns the bandage prepared for his eyes.

'May all journalists do as I have done,
In performance of duty no danger shun!'
He said, and all fearless t' expire,
He folded his arms and commanded to 'fire!'

And quick from the rifles there went a flash,
And in the still air there sounded a crash ;
And vengeance 'gainst him was accom-
plished then,
To the lasting abhorrence of merciful men.
(*Examiner* 23 May 1885)

PEACE AND WAR

If great nations would band for conserving
of peace,
On basis of right, then ambition might
cease
To deluge the earth with the blood of man-
kind,
And the nations should ponder, with
anxious intent,
How money and effort on armaments spent
Might be used in promoting the blessings
of peace,
Were danger of warfare for certain to
cease.

But nations are arming more every day,
And vying in means one another to slay ;
And the act of a despot might warfare re-
store
To be e'en more destructive than ever
before.

And men will make war till that terrible
day,
When at dread Armageddon, in mighty

array,
The legions of nations, inspired to agree
For War's overthrow, will assembled shall
be.

Then woe unto Gog, and woe unto those
Who aiding his cause shall those legions
oppose,
For God, by His prophets, hath said on
them all
With terrible force retribution shall fall.

S

January 27.
(*Examiner* 22 February 1890)

TASMANIAN FORTH

The banks of Forth - lowlands and hills,
There's surely beauty there,
In forest wild and purling rills
And fields that verdant are.

The village on the valley's sides,
With nature's shrubbery,
And where the Forth in volume glides,
There blooms the Christmas tree.*

Each upland with its winding road
And rural dwellings near,
Where industry hath long abode
In homes to many dear.

The sea's expanse, not far away,
With beach of smoothest sand,
Where friend meets friend on holiday,
And children hand in hand.

O pleasant is Tasmanian Forth,
And her surrounding too,
And churches there proclaim of worth
To Christian tenets true.

J S

*The 'prostanthera,' locally known by many as the Christmas tree, from its being in full bloom at Christmas. Only a few specimens of this tree escaped destruction in former years in the clearing of the land at Hamilton-on-Forth.
(*Examiner* 21 December 1894, p.5)

THE GOOD FIGHT

The following was read by the chairman (Mr James Smith) at the meeting in connection with the Forth Wesleyan Sunday school anniversary held on the 24th ult:-

There is a fight progressing,
A long continued fight,

Wherein sure hope possessing
Christians contend for right,
Contend 'gainst persecution
And every ill design
That tries to work confusion
Against the cause Divine.

True Christians, self-denying,
And now in every land,
While wrong in vain is trying
Their efforts to withstand.
As to all generous feeling
And every noble thought,
All truth through them appealing,
With every good is fraught.

More potent than the thunder
Of fell ambition's war,
As shall be seen with wonder,
The words of Christians are,
As fast they come all glowing
From zeal that knows no fear,
High wisdom's glories showing,
And all true blessings dear.

And all victorious
The Christian cause shall be,
In power glorious,
With all mankind made free.
Made free from error's sorrows,
Made free from hate and strife,
While works of faith shall hallow
The guarded joys of life.

J S

(*Examiner* 2 May 1895, p.3)

WE HAVE RIGHTS TO MAINTAIN

(From an English standpoint.)

['Providence, for war is the best prevention of it.' - LORD BACON.]

O, let us be wise
And watchful and strong,
Lest foes us surprise,
And revel in wrong.

Our Lion is old.
He is wiser for this ;
His scions are bold,
With temper like his
With temper like his
His scions are bold ;
With temper like his.

Since in menace of peace
Nations arming e'er are,
We our forces increase

To be ready for war.

We have rights to maintain
That are dearer than life,
And for which might and main
Would be fearless in strife.

Those rights there to uphold
There are millions as brave
As our warriors of old
Of the land and the wave.

Millions ready would be
To repel foreign thrall,
In the name of the free
At the trumpet's first call.

Forth. J S
(*Examiner* 13 May 1895, p.3)

A BOYISH ESCAPADE*

Two naughty boys
Once made a noise
To mar a neighbour's peace ;
Till they were told
Their ma' would scold
Unless the noise they'd cease.

Then said the boys,
'We'll cause a noise,
We'll have a jolly lark ;
We'll run away,
From home will stay,
They'll shout for us ere dark.'

Away they went,
On mischief bent,
For they had not been taught
With that due care
Should make boys e'er
Do only as they ought.

They pelted birds,
They scattered herds,
Until they saw a bull
Pawing the earth
And looking wrath,
As if he'd charge them full.

Then up a tree
That chanced to be
Convenient for their need ;
From limb to limb
They went from him
As on he came with speed.

He kept them there

In state of fear
Till day began to wane,
Then went away,
And quickly they
Sped to a fence they'd seen.

They crossed the fence,
And hurried thence,
In tremulous hope that they
By a detour
From harm secure
Would find their homeward way.

In abject dread
They onward sped,
But wandered round and round,
As many will
Who have not skill
To traverse unknown ground.

As it grew dark,
They feared their lark
Might end disastrously ;
And glad were they,
When in their way
They found a hollow tree.

The hollow space
A refuge place
These two boys quickly made ;
And to be hid
With brushwood did
The entrance barricade.

The glow worms bright
Did them afright ;
They thought they might be eyes
Of loathsome things
With venom stings,
Nocturnal enemies.

The owl's tu-whoo
To them was new,
And seemed to mock their dread ;
The kangaroo
Alarmed them, too,
With his strange thudding tread.

Within a hole
Of that tree bole,
An old screech owl did dwell ;
And at his screech,
Those boys did each
Send forth a frantic yell.

A lantern's light
In gloom of night
Had roused that tardy bird ;
And, strange to tell,

Those boys their yell
Was by their father heard.

Returning home
He chanced to come
To them in their distress ;
And now they say,
From home away
They'll surely wander less.

For the sad fright
They caused that night
To their mamma they grieve ;
And to be true,
And rightly do,
A fervent promise give.

Forth. J S

(*Examiner* 28 November 1896)

**Introduced by Henry Button: 'An esteemed correspondent sends the following verses, which I feel assured my readers will enjoy...' In his diaries Smith refers to delivering the poem to Button in Launceston.*